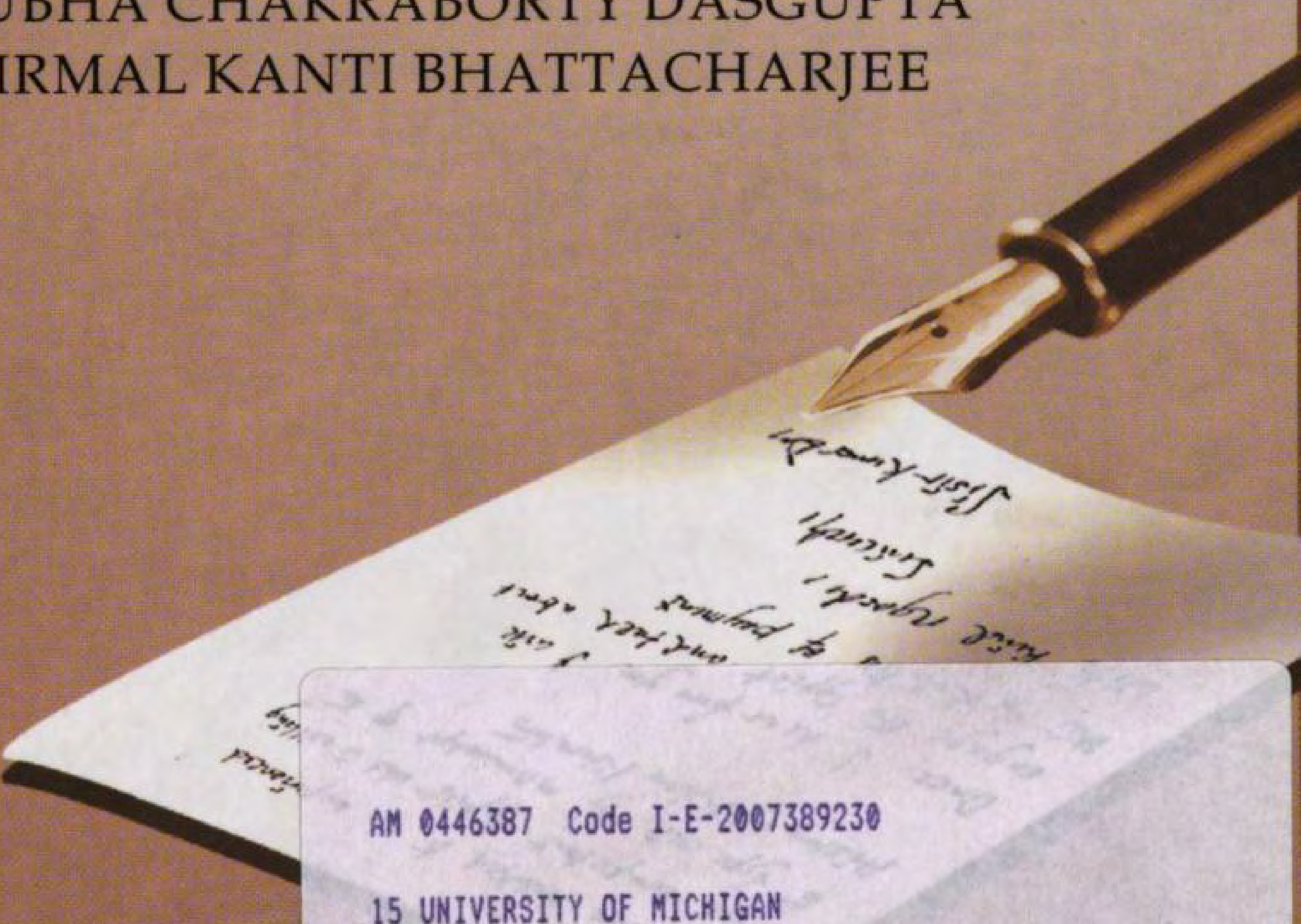
Studies in Comparative Literature

Theory, Culture and Space

IN MEMORY OF
SISIR KUMAR DAS

Edited by
JANCY JAMES
CHANDRA MOHAN
SUBHA CHAKRABORTY DASGUPTA
NIRMAL KANTI BHATTACHARJEE



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Studies in
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
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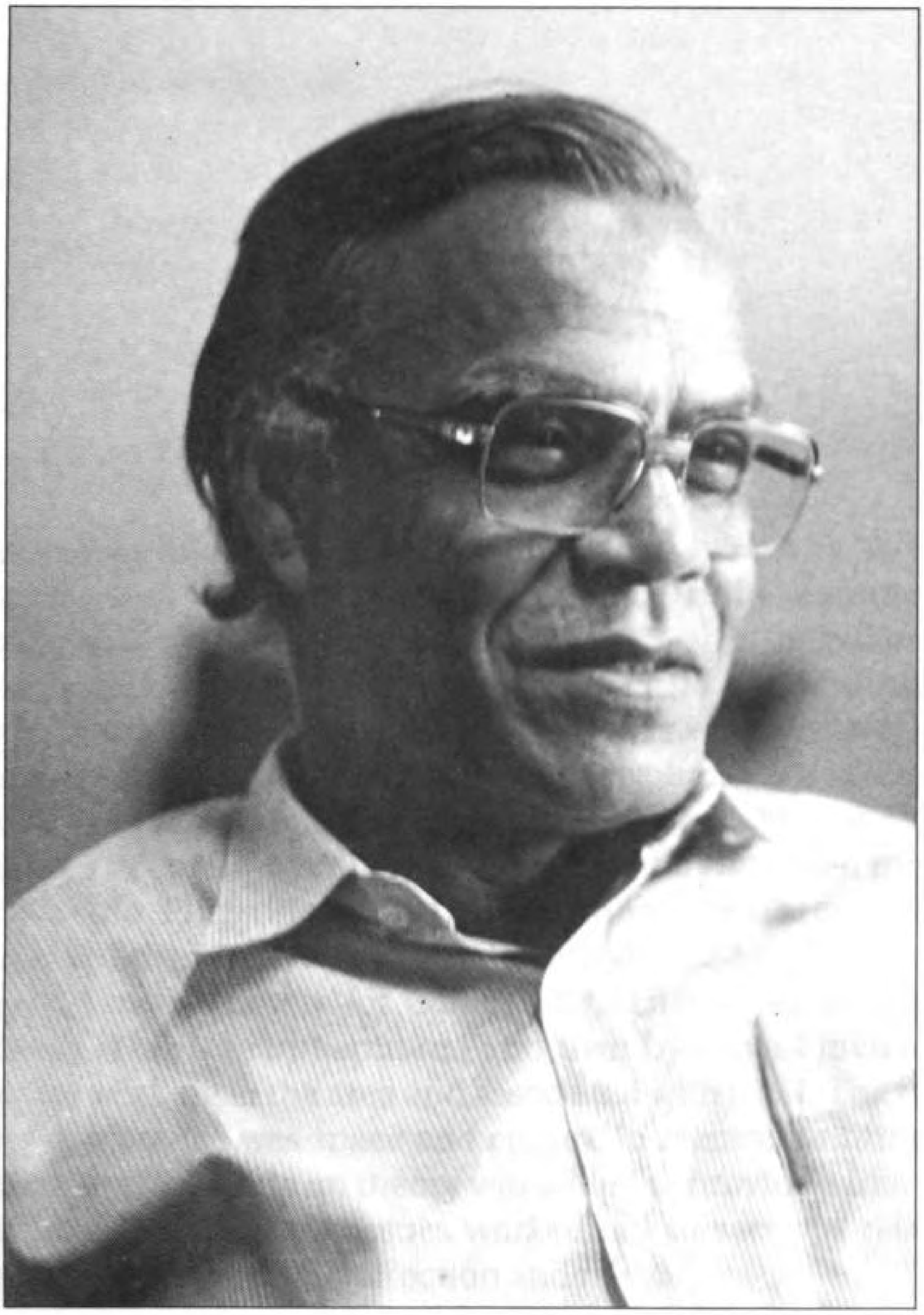

Prof. Sisir Kumar Das

Editors' Note

Extending frontiers is ubiquitous to literary creativity. To extend the borders of reality stretching the space of experience into imagination, dream, vision is a writer's license. As the writer draws her resources from varied sources, the critic also positions and repositions herself in new sites of ideas and responses and thereby extends the frontiers of criticism. This volume is a selection of such critical responses to literary challenges within the broad framework of Comparative Literature as they emerged primarily from the Fifth Biennial International Conference of the Comparative Literature Association of India (CLAI) in January 2001 hosted by the Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, and then by way of invitation to critics working in the area and associated with CLAI. The focus of the conference was space and culture in relation to frontiers of literature. A section on theory was added to provide a framework within which specific issues worked out in sections related to culture and space gain direction and relevance.

In the section on theory there are five out of seven texts that have the word 'Indian' in the title, providing a locus for comparativism. The essays are wide-ranging and take the readers through a metadiscourse on the critique of the nation-state, to a comprehensive and systemic overview of contemporary literary criticism in India, to readings of Indian literary histories through pluridimensional concepts embedded in schools of Indian thought, to generic constructions embodying particular structures of meaning. There is a call in most of the essays to reorganise literary studies along larger democratic frames, to include what is present in reality, but rendered absent in areas of practising mainstream discourses. As we read the essays grounded in the local or the particular, we also realise that the particular is really not free of the general – the issues themselves emerge out of an urgency to contribute towards a more just vision of things within the existing world-order. In essays where the authors move out of a particular local space, the perspective shifts to the post-colonial in an attempt to find a referent, problematising the very effort because of a characteristic condition of dispersion along with heterogeneous categories of analysis and ambivalence of the locus of 'post', and call for an attention to diversity in critiques of colonial and neo-colonial cultural imperatives. An important point of beginning for comparative studies also emerges in one of the essays where there is a call to engage with transferential, intercultural texts that are "pushed towards dialogue sometimes, not through commonality, but through historicised differences" emerging out of a "wholeness" or "cultural centering".

The second section is devoted to cultural studies within a comparative framework. In the first two essays the quawwali and the ghazal are read as transferential, intercultural texts with dynamic potentials, constantly breaking boundaries and reinscribing themselves in different cultural terrains and different zones of affect. An essay on the reception of Gita by three important Indian political leaders during the freedom movement leading to three different paths points to the challenges that lie before the comparatist if one moves into a valid interdisciplinary area and tries to find answers in history thrown up by questions asked in the domain of reception studies. The borders between comparative literature studies and cultural studies are fuzzy, but it is perhaps necessary for the sake of the discipline of comparative literature to point out that cultural studies have always been integral to literary studies and more specifically to comparative studies that engage with literary phenomena within an intercultural or diachronic framework, bringing in perspectives of different times and different ways of being to bear on the singular. The two other essays in this section take up aboriginal and tribal texts in the context of multiculturalism and an intersemiotic study of a film text and a performance text.

The third section is entitled "Space" and each of the seven essays comprising this section foregrounds a particular area of meaning generated by the word. The first studies connections of toponyms with cultural values and concepts of identity and discovers the beginnings of patterns that lead to certain insights about relations and connectivities between past and present, myth and modernity, while the second explores space in terms of interiorization and works out its implications as a literary device, prompting a rereading of texts in a revitalised and richer context. There are essays dealing with generic texts of landscape narratives appearing in different forms in different periods of history of Vasco da Gama's narrative of his first voyage which turns out to be a case study of an inability to move out of the self, to encounter alterity and the consequences, the linking of geographic shifts to ideological shifts in the lives of women protagonists in texts by women writers of the contours of suffering in women protagonists who find themselves in a foreign land and again an article problematising notions of nationhood and identity by focusing on displaced individuals in very different contexts. The essays are important because they bring a critical edge to issues that are often taken for granted and they do this by juxtaposing one text or one phenomenon against another, a minimal comparative practice. However, the essays may be accessed not just for providing crucial sources of reference for critical understanding, but also for creative stimuli embedded in the conceptual and visionary undercurrents.

The theme of the conference that is behind this volume was worked out by its late president, Sisir Kumar Das. It was characteristically conceived in terms of a celebration of literatures cradled in landscapes and cultures. We come together in this volume to pay a small homage to his very singular vision of literary studies and his scholarship. The essays are prefaced by a note on his works and achievements.

Sisir Kumar Das*

AMIYA DEV

It is Sisir Kumar Das's birthday today. He was born this day in 1936. And he passed away earlier this year on 7 May. What he accomplished in these sixty-six and a half years is incredible. A glance at his bibliography sets us wondering: how could he do all this in one life? One would need three lives. The daemon that goes about egging people on to creativity must not have given him any rest. One book to another to another must have been its scheme of things—no respite from writing. Yet if you rang his bell at Delhi you would ordinarily find him eager to meet you, not withdrawn into his own world and wrestling with words and ideas. No, you would not find him lounging, in fact if you looked you would probably see a book or a notebook spread on his desk. He had gone to the door from there and would go back there once you left. But he would not feel distracted that you had come and were taking time off his precious work. Indeed he must have had a pact with his daemon that it would not bother him when he was with a friend or with a would-be friend. Not that he did not love *adda* though he would not seek its surfeit the way *adda* regulars are prone to. Besides, where was the *adda* in Delhi for him? It was only

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*Introductory piece presented at the Conference on Sisir Kumar Das and his *History of Indian Literature* at the Department of Comparative Literature on 7th November, 2003.

when he came to Kolkata that he would find a congenial atmosphere for that. Delhi and Kolkata had reversed places for him: Delhi was his place of work, Kolkata his holiday. How did he feel to travel to Kolkata where he had been born and grown up and had his first spell of creativity? What indeed did he feel to spend nights in guesthouses in a city whose dust knew him? Does one have to quote Thomas Mann's Tonio Kroeger in order to understand Sisir Kumar Das's feelings for a city that had refused him a permanent home? He called himself an exile.

Yet it could be because he had to live away from his language that his pull to it was so acute—a kind of Socratic reason might have been in action. True he could not write as much poetry as he would have liked to do, but his plays were not few. And one cannot say for certain if he would have written more plays and plays of a greater variety if he had been part of the Kolkata theatre world. His distance might have given him a freedom that theatre writers do not always have. He emerged as a dramatist on his own and it was the business of the theatre to adjust to him. That we were niggardly of giving him his due recognition as a poet and playwright was entrenched in our own politics of recognition. The lately launched *Bahirbanga* forum had quoted him as a signal instance of neglect for *pravasi* Bangla writers. There might have been another reason behind this, the reluctance on our part to admit that a good scholar can also be a good writer. (I am glad that on today's programme you have two events dealing with his writing *per se*, one of which is again an illustration that scholarship and creativity are not strange bedfellows. And thus also, I suppose, you have justified the title of your programme: "A Man of Letters". Of course if you had asked him whether he was a man of letters he would have said, indeed he was, for he had been writing all these letters to scholars and scholar-writers asking them to join him at conferences on the prospects of comparative literature in India.)

Being exiled from Kolkata was painful, but there was perhaps a compensation for it. He did not have to be proud of Kolkata being the last word in India in intellect. His natural modesty was nourished in Delhi. So many languages and so many literatures, such good writing in so many of them, and some sharp minds too to come in touch with, that he didn't have to fall back upon memory and dreams. He always introduced himself as a teacher of Bengali. And that was from his sense of propriety and not false modesty.

But being in an MIL department he made full use of it and gathered as much knowledge as possible of the other languages and literatures, not quite the case with single language and literature teachers even in a multilingual set-up. That he came to be accepted far and wide in the country was not due to his academic credentials alone (formidable by all standards) but also to the credibility he had earned through such hard work and sense of purpose. Indeed Delhi didn't fail him, or perhaps we should say, he didn't fail Delhi.

Thus, being grounded in Bangla and with a growing and active interest in other Indian literatures, he became a perfect exponent of Comparative Indian Literature. But his being an exponent meant not theorizing alone, not preaching it alone with a missionary zeal, but practicing it with actual literary studies, scores of them. Who can ever forget his essays on *bhakti,* his analysis of a whole variety of medieval literary genres and forms, and above all his masterpiece, an integrated history of Indian literature? It was he who had chastened my high-handed approach to the discipline during my collaboration with him in putting together the seminar we had held at Shimla in the late eighties. And Shimla was not the only event we shared, there were others, a number of them. *Ekhon Sab Aleek* (Now all looks unreal) is the title Sankha Ghosh has given to memories of friends and companions. Nothing can be truer to me of those days of excitement and hope.

His practice of comparative literature included translation. He had learnt classical Greek. But he did not keep it to himself but shared it with others by translating Sophocles and Euripides and the lyric into Bangla. From Sophocles he had chosen the two most known, *King Oidipous* and *Antigone,* and from Euripides two most tragic and probably the most relevant to our times, *Trojan Women* and *Iphigeneia at Aulis.* Another Sophocles, *Oidipous at Colonus,* was left unfinished. What was extraordinary was his translation of Greek lyrics, I mean the very fact, for our usual association of them as Greek-less readers in this country had been with English. The slim volume in Bangla, with an intertext for a title, *Bohu Yuger Opar Hote* (From across the ages), containing ninety poems, mostly fragments as in the canon, was absolutely reassuring for us. We must also remember his translation of *Poetics,* born out of a need he felt his students had to reach a clear understanding of Aristotelian tenets of criticism. And though he had been more at home in ancient Greece, he had occasional transaction with other writing, with the Chinese poet I-Ching or Lorca's *Yerma* or the modern Greek Seferis. No doubt his translations were acts of love, but they were also acts of discipline, for he did have a sustained reflection on the dependability of translation. He did not shy away from the home truth that translation is meant for those who have no access to the original. Now, how are they to know that what they are reading is dependable? It was in pursuit of this that he arrived at a set of rigours for the translator. And in his own practice he tried to follow them.

He illuminated many other areas of comparative literature. His two studies in Rabindranath's reception in China and Spain, done in collaboration with Tan Wen and Shyamaprasad Ganguly respectively, are signal instances. In the first he saw how Tagore was caught up in China's own literary-cultural controversy posterior to the May 4 movement. In the second he narrated how Spain, especially in the persons of Juan Ramon Jimenez and Zenobia Camprubi, had a regular efflorescence of Tagore translations in preparation for his visit that did not unfortunately come through, and how the reception that began in 1914-15 went on undeterred. As to the East-West relations in general, his studies were specific, whether of Christianity in the context of Hinduism or of western sailors on eastern seas, not unaware of the postcolonial perspectives on them, but not encumbered by their excess. Besides, he did not quite believe that the East-West encounter had all been a matter of regret. Probably he had undertaken his cue from Bankim whose life he had written anew, that English was welcome as long as it served our purpose.

Who would believe Sisir Kumar Das also wrote a linguistic account of Malto, a Dravidian language spoken in a part of Bihar? That was perhaps not merely an application of his study of linguistics, but also an attestation to the non-linearity of the language map of India. Languages are not neatly spaced around, one not mixing with another—quite the contrary. He observed a natural bilingualism in the border districts of two states, quite different from the acquired bilingualism of mother tongue and Hindi/English. His linguistics also helped him mark the frequent code switch in our speech habit from one language to another, when available or when cultivated as in the case of *manipravala*, let us say, of Malayalam and Sanskrit. In fact the word *manipravala* was one of his favourite words, and he would repeatedly cite the collocation of Sanskrit and Prakrit/s in so-called Sanskrit drama as its canonical instance. Within my experience on the Indian academe I haven't seen anyone as alert as he was to the actuality of the Indian language map. I don't know if he held a view on the state reorganization on the linguistic basis in 1956 (incidentally he closed the IXth volume—his second—of the integrated history of Indian literature at that date), but the most he might have said was it had purely administrative purposes. He himself had picked up a few Indian languages other than his mother tongue, though he was very modest about it. But in that capacity alone he was the most formidable Indian *comparatiste* of our time. And I am so glad that international *comparatistes* too recognized it. He had been invited to give a plenary speech at the ICLA 91 at Tokyo. He had also been invited to speak on the Bangla-Portuguese encounter in Portugal (he later wrote a play on Dom Antonio as an instance of that encounter) and on voyage at a symposium held at Cape Town as part of the ICLA 2000 in South Africa. And when I had induced him to write on medieval Indian lyric for Earl Miner designed Lyric volume for the ICLA Intercultural Studies Committee, *The Renewal of Song*, Earl Miner was overjoyed on reading it. I can add several other names, of scholars dedicated to inter-cultural studies, who had the greatest regard for him. Yet his modesty was unbounded and the enthusiasm for the discipline exemplary. But he knew the discipline would not thrive without rigour and the least scholars could do at conferences was turn up for academic transactions on time. I can still see his figure at the head of stairs at Delhi University's Tagore building or Jamia Millia's Humanities block. Comparative literature in India would never again be the same. When again are we going to find such scholarship combined with such modesty?

Sisir Kumar Das was a simple person. Coming from a modest background we often turn out conceited, parading alienation from all around. He was far from that. You never heard him defy his roots or deny his neighbourhood. The home he and his wife had set up in Delhi might have ashamed many university dons. And from Bungalow Lane to Probyn Road was not much of a material shift (one Rabindra Puraskar had helped him buy some essential furniture—that was about all and maybe a few more books). He named his children Goethe, Dante and Laura simply out of love for poetry, no show-off. He was a family man and had the ability to be happy. He had no deity except work, no creed except excellence. For this latter he had acknowledged a debt to one of his teachers in school whose example of pursuit of intellect untouched of ambition sustained him. To me he is an instance of how much one can achieve by striving, a prime human quality. And he learned so fast. He worked so fast. He wrote so fast. I once saw him write a postcard while walking and without much distortion to his characters that were so beautiful, as anyone who had received his letters or seen his book of poems, *Avalupta Chaturtha Charan* (The fourth line is missing), would agree.

Apropos his *History of Indian Literature,* the two volumes he had written, he had a feeling that not many had read them. It was not praise that he had been looking forward to (and he did get some whether informed or uninformed). He had been looking forward to a debate on his method. Barring Aijaz Ahmad no cultural critic of name seemed to have paid much heed to it. Was it because he had been too straightforward? He had once told Rene Wellek that his great history of criticism came short of a wider scope by being confined to Europe. Wellek admitted his lack of knowledge outside Europe and said that non-European histories would have to be written by non-Europeans like him. Did those words in any way inspire him? It cannot be denied, however, that the *History* is his scholarly masterpiece. (I place it above his perception of Rabindranath's English writings for its wider scope.) If for nothing else, for his formulation of *pro-phane* and *meta-phane* for certain features of nineteenth and twentieth century Indian literatures, he will be remembered. Of course this is rhetoric, for he has done much more than that—the method itself is a major feat of historiography. And I am glad that we are going to spend some time on that today. Nothing can be better. And maybe this will begin that debate he had asked for. And we shall make amends.

It is six months now that Sisir Kumar Das is gone. Are we getting used to his absence? Does it occur to us that one of day before yesterday's news items, Safdar Hashmi's murderers convicted after fourteen years, would have made him happy, for he knew Safdar Hashmi? Will he turn into memory in another six months? Mahabharata's *ahani ahani* ... are hard words, no matter how profound. But is there a choice?

THEORY

Indian Literary Criticism Today: The Challenge and the Response

K. SATCHIDANANDAN

Traditional Indian poetics is in a crisis today. Its categories are proving clearly insufficient to explain several of the modern genres, forms and movements in Indian literature. This often unacknowledged crisis had already begun with the maturing of Indian languages that declared their independence from Sanskrit centuries ago even while retaining some of its aspects that they found useful to their flowering and growth. These languages had their own literary traditions, mostly oral, that informed their new developments. Some of them like Tamil had a different poetics altogether. Their canons were formed not only with the examples from Sanskrit literature many of which they got translated or adapted, but by Western, especially English, classics as well that were either translated or emulated as models. The inadequacy of the existing paradigms became acute in the nineteenth century when, mostly under the Western influence, new prose genres like the novel and the short story and even modern prose drama began to develop in our languages. Criticism for some time continued to fight shy of these genres and to confine itself to poetry and verse drama since it hardly had any tools to explain and interpret the new forms. The crisis began to affect even traditional forms like poetry with the advent of new genres like the sonnet, the pastoral, the elegy, the new lyric or the sequence poem and new movements like Modernism that replaced the simile and the metaphor with the symbol and the image and experimented with free verse and prose as the vehicles of poetic imagination. Imagination itself had grown unconventional with new modes like symbolism, surrealism, antipoetry and the like. Then came the new movements like dalit writing, women's writing, tribal writing, nativism, ecocentric writing and modern folk writing, not to speak of the Indian variants of post-Modernism, all of which sprang from the new social awakenings and carried a new intellectual and verbal energy that could hardly be explained by traditional poetics.

Behind all these were the radical changes happening in Indian life itself : the complexification of life brought about by the changed environment, the new textures of urban living with its contradictory aspects of penury and luxury made possible by new technologies, the intensification of alienation among the intelligentsia, the angst of the new awareness of space and time, the growing consumer instinct, the loss of traditional values and the growth of the new post-industrial ethos, the continued intervention of the modern State in every aspect of the lives of its subjects, the revolutionary awakenings of the marginalised and oppressed sections of the people based on caste, class, religion and gender,the threats of war, poverty and terrorism, the search for new identities, and the new structures of feeling generated by these transformed environments of existence. The canons were being constantly changed, the institution of literature itself was under threat, the status-quoist concepts were being challenged and the paradigms proving hopelesly inadequate to meet the hermeneutic needs of literary criticism.

The history of Indian criticism in the last few decades has been the history of the varied responses to these challenges and the attempts to arrive at some critical canon that might help unlock and explain contemporary Indian texts.

I

One response, call it a form of enlightened revivalism, has been an attempt to extend, develop and reinterpret traditional poetics in order to apply its concepts to modern texts and genres, at times incorporating the concepts ofWestern poetics in the process. Indian poetics has often been identified with Sanskrit poetics though there is a whole parallel tradition in Tamil and in Urdu–derived from the Persian tradition- not to speak of individual texts - like *Kavirajamarga* in Kannada - available in the languages and the poetics implied in our oral literary practices. Traditional scholars like M. Hiriyanna, S. K. De, P. V. Kane, V. Raghavan, K. C. Pandey, K. Krishna Moorthy, S. K. Chari and Krishna Chaitanya along with foreign scholars like Daniel H. H. Ingalls and Anand Coomaraswamy have played a major role in giving it this pan-Indian status through their books in English. Indian languages also have scholars like Kuttikrishna Marar of Malayalam who have interpreted language texts in the light of Sanskrit poetics as well as those like K. P. Narayana Pisharody of Kerala or Ramaranjan Mookherjee of Bengal who have interpreted classical Sanskrit poetics texts for the language readers. There are also those like M. Leelavathy or Joseph Mundassery of Malayalam who have tried to compare Eastern and Western concepts of poetics or even combine them in their critical analyses.

Critics like Krishna Rayan have read Sanskrit poetics in the light of the new theories from the West and have come up with extended and flexible interpretations of the central concepts of Sanskrit poetics like *dhvani, rasa, rasadhvani, vakrokti* and *anumâna* along with peripheral concepts like *abhidhâ, lakshana,vibhâva, anubhava* etc. In his book, *Text and Sub-text* (1987) Rayan looks at the theory of suggestion and tries to establish that suggestion – the production of unstated, subsurface, indirect, multiple, emotive meaning–is what distinguishes modern literature from the literature of eatrlier periods.Rayan examines texts like Tennyson's *Becket* alongside T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral,* Christopher Fry's *Curtmantle* and Jean Anouilh's *Becket ou L'Honneur de Dieu.* Four of Thomas Hardy's novels exploring the notion of a return to the roots are analysed in relation to novels by Margaret Drabble that pursue a similar theme. The book also looks at the practice of suggestion and evocation in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the poetry of Yeats and the minimalist, micro-suggestive, poetic practice of the *Review* poets like Ian Hamilton, David Harsent, Colin Falck, Hugo Williams and Michael Fried.The critic quotes critical passages from Mallarmé, T. S. Eliot, Arthur

Symmons,Yeats, A. C. Bradley, Edmund Wilson and W. K. Wimsatt to relate the theory of suggestion to the symbolist practice as well as the Sanskrit concept of *rasadhvani*.He also considers the binary oppositions like emotive/referential meaning (I.A. Richards), oblique/direct (E. M. W. Tillyard), local texture/logical structure (J. C. Ransom) and intensive/ extensive meaning (Allen Tate) to be renamings of the suggestion/statement distinction found in Eastern as well as Western poetics. He also associates concepts like 'depth language' (Philip Wheelwright) and 'interiority'(W. J. Ong) with *dhvani* / suggestion. In *Burning Bush: Suggestion in Indian Literature*(1988) Krishna Rayan extends the *rasadhvani* concept to modern subcontinental texts in various languages, by authors like Nirmal Verma, Kiran Nagarkar, M. S. Sarna, Pranabjoti Deka, Lokenath Bhattacharya, Rajinder Singh Bedi (fiction) P. Lankesh, Kumaran Asan, Jayanta Mahapatra, Nissim Ezekiel, Dina Nath Nadim, Soubhagya Kumar Mishra (poetry), Shrikant Shah, Ediriwira Sarachchandra (play) and others besides some older texts from classical Tamil and Sindhi in order to demonstrate the applicability of the theory to different languages, genres and periods. In *Sahitya: A Theory*, Rayan produces an eclectic theory for Indian critical practice by bringing together Sanskrit, Tamil and Western concepts with plenty of examples and quotations. *Nâtyasâstra* and *Tolkappiyam* are referred to as two basic texts. Here, he also establishes parallels between the *rasas* of *Nâtyasâstra* and the *meypadus* of *Tolkappiyam*. For example, *sringâra* is identified with *uvakai, hâsya* with *nakai, kâruna* with *azhukai, raudra* with *vekuli, vira* with *perumitam, bhayânaka* with *accam, bibhatsa* with *ilivaral* and *atbhuta* with *marutkai*. The critic looks at the diverse aspects of literature like literariness, image, narrative, character, style, rhythm, landscape and evaluation. In the chapter on landscape, he introduces the *tinai* concept of *Tolkappiyam* with the accompanying *uri* and *mutal* viz, *kurinci* (*mutal*-mountain, *uri-punartal* or premarital union), *marutam* (*mutal*-lowland or riverside,*uri-oodal* or marital union sulking over infidelity) *neytal (mutal*-seashore, *uri-iranagal* or anxious pining in the state of separation), *mullai (mutal*-forest or pasture, *uri-iruttal* or patient waiting) and *palai (mutal*-desert, *uri-pirital* or separation). The landscape here is the signifier and the bond that holds it to the signified is arbitrary and fixed by conventions which were sustained for several generations during the *Sangam* period. Ayyappa Paniker has also tried to apply the *tinai* theory to Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's *Kayar* while V. J. Sebastian has done it to a series of contemporary poems. S. Carlos (Tamilavan) has also tried to extend and apply the theory to modern texts in Tamil.

While these are interesting experiments, the method can work fully only in a stable static culture with a lot of received assumptions and capable of a large number of shared responses. The theory of *rasas* is also too limited and rigid to make it critically effective while applied to modern texts where the boundaries of emotions are blurred, moods are in a flux and responses more complex. Behind these theories is a whole static world view and a fixed view of literaure and literariness. They have also a tendency to look at literature, especially poetry, as a craft , detached from its time and society. Both classical Sanskrit and Tamil poetics therefore fail to historicise its texts and themselves need to be historicised to be understood.Concepts like *dhvani* and *ouchitya* and the linguistic injunctions against *asleela, grâmya* and *chyutasamskâra* can hardly be isolated from the class that has generated them and hence do not apply to several subaltern forms and movements, both ancient and modern.The traditional concepts of *pratibhâ* or genius, *sahridaya* or the competent reader, the *sahitatva* or the fixed togetherness of the word and the meaning – compared to the bond of Parvati and Parameswara, meaning as something deposited in the work by the author, and the authorial institution itself emerge from an idealist philosophical premise. The concept of reader as the producer of meaning, of the text as a flux, and the absence or the eternal deferance of a ' final meaning', literariness itself as the effect of reading, and the historical and ideological determinations of the text are alien to this aesthetic ideology. While the concepts of *dhvani* and *anumâna* do take the reader into account, it is an abstract reader outside real history. It is seldom bothered with the question of the historical construction of subjectivity and hence fail to answer several questions about writing, reading and authorship. This also applies to Persian poetics that deals exclusively with forms available in classical Persian or Arabic from which Urdu has adopted them- like *masnavi, nazm, ghazal, rubai, qavvali, manaqib, nama, qasida, qit 'a* (or *muqatta 'at)* etc , their prosody, rhyme patterns, rules of composition, style and evocation of moods and feelings. The tradition is still alive in the criticism of traditional poetry, but while discussing the new poetry and fiction, critics often depend on modern Western theories as can be seen in the practices of Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, Shamim Hanfi or Gopichand Narang.

II

Quite a few critics, in English as well as the languages, have been employing Western theoretical tools to analyse Indian texts, both old and new. The influence ofWestern criticism was evident from the very beginning of modern criticism in India that had emerged along with the new genres like the short story, the novel and the modern prose-play. Only the credos and fashions have changed with the changes in Western theory. If initially it was only English criticism that had influenced our critics, later Russian, French and German schools also began to have their impact. This began chiefly with the emergence of Marxist and Freudian analytical modes. The early Marxist models were often reductive as the critics were not yet familiar with the works of Antonio Gramsci, the Frankfurt School – like those of Adorno, Habermas or Hokheimer – or even of Michael Bakhtin, Ernst Fischer, Ernst Bloch,Walter Benjamin, and Raymond Williams and the later theorists – like Louis Althusser, Pierre Macherey, Fredric Jameson or Roland Barthes – not to speak of the post-Structuralists – were yet to emerge. In that circumstance the models were chiefly from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe : Zhadanov, Lunacharsky, Plekhanov, Lukacs and others. No wonder they equated Modernism with decadence, upheld socialist realism as the sacred model for committed writers to follow and often pursued a narrow class –reductionist approach. One of the reasons for the fall of the Progressive Literary Movement was this exclusionist approach that would not try to read literary works using modern tools to grasp their progressive implications or interpret commitment in a larger context where it could also involve social concerns of various kinds other than purely class concerns.They would not have committed this mistake if they had carefully read even Marx or Lenin. Marx was a great admirer of the Greeks and of Shakespeare and in many of his analyses he exposed the contradictions in the self-proclaimed committed writing (eg; his detailed critique of Eugene Sue's *The Mysteries of Paris* in *The Holy Family* where he brings out the contrast between the authorial claims to radicalism and the reactionary implications of the text itself) while upholding certain other forms of writing that did not make any claim to commitment. Macherey has looked closely at Lenin's symptomatic reading and appreciation of Tolstoy as the 'mirror of the Russian revolution' as against Plekhanov's accusation that Tolstoy was a reactionary as he was a Catholic and an aristocrat by birth. Here Lenin goes beyond the empirical biographical facts to the truth of the text itself that transcends the author's class origins and proclaimed opinions. A similar hermeneutic conflict can also be seen in the well-known argument over Kafka between Lukacs on one side and Benjamin and Bloch on the other. To Lukacs Kafka represented decadence and morbidity, but Benjamin and Bloch read Kafka politically to see in his works a sharp critique of bureaucracy, an expression of the solitude of the individual cut off from the community and the premonitions of the Nazi nightmare. The exclusivist approach of the early Progressives blurred the distinction between party literature and literature itself. While their method could partly explain 'Progressive' literay works as they understood them, it was incapable of understanding more complex works of literature that contained many voices and grappled with many contradictions. The result was that some of the better writers of the period, whose multiple articulations did greater justice to the society of the times, were kept out of the Marxist canon. In Kerala for example, fiction writers like D M Pottekkatt and poets like Kedamangalam Pappukkutty were hailed as revolutionaries while fiction writers like Basheer and Uroob and poets like Edassery and Vailoppilly who captured the deeper contradictions of their society remained outside the canon. Only recently have some unorthodox Marxist and Marxisant critics begun to develop a more open approach to literature taking into account the post-Colonial and post-Structuralist insights into the working of language, unconscious and society. Early Freudian criticism too suffered from reductionist attitudes that analysed the characters as though they were living beings and attributed their motifs to their author. Only after Lacan, Deleuze and Guttari has Freud begun to be understood in all his complexity as also his concept of unconscious that is structured like a language.

If Sydney and Arnold had held sway for some time in liberal Indian criticism, later they were replaced by T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards. This happened especially during the emergence of Modern poetry that came to be associated with Eliot's modes and mores. Eliot did have an influence on early Modernist poets like Mardhekar, Muktibodh, Bishnu Dey, Navkant Barua, Gopal Krishna Adiga, Kaa. Naa. Subramanyam, Ayyappa Paniker and others. But they chiefly imbibed Eliot's iconoclasm in terms of form while their poetry was by no means a 'pastiche', but was sufficiently indigenous and their formal innovations sprang from the inner need of their own literay histories. They were no more 'Elioteans' than the new novelists like Nirmal Verma, Krishna Baldev Vaid and Ananthamurthy were 'Joyceans'. The new critical tools were patently inadequate to understand the new writing in Indian languages as they also had their deeper social roots in the urbanisation of the country, the alienation of the intellectuals and the disillusionment with the system and the values it stood for. Semantics and semiotics would have helped grasp the verbal plays and the deployment of symbols and metaphors in the new writing, but not their socio-spiritual environment. Existentialist and phenomenological tendencies dominated the critical scene in the sixties when literature was conceived as the apotheosis of solitude and the articulation of metaphysical angst and alienation. Northrop Frye's archetypal patterns were at times contextualised and put to effective use especially in the study of poetry. Another interesting development is the developing dialogue between Marxist and post-Structuralist approaches to writing. Roland Barthes's political semiology and his concept of the death of the author and the distinctions he draws between the 'work' and the 'text', Jacques Lacan's theory of the unconscious as the 'discourse of the other' and the mode of symptomatic reading that derives from it as illustrated by Louis Althusser and Pierre Macherey, Jacques Derrida's strategies of deconstruction meant to subvert the hegemonic discourses and institutions by reading them from the margins and bowing them up by developing their contradictions and Michel Foucault's theories of the power-knowledge nexus and the construction of subjectivity combined with Bakhtin's concept of ideology 'inscribed' in the linguistic sign, of dialogic imagination and of the carnivalesque and Gramsci's concept of the 'popular'- all these can liberate Marxist criticism from the sociological reductionism and the mechanical application of the class theory that had characterised its earlier phases. In fact this is happening in a big way in languages like Malayalam and Bengali, where , as Octavio Paz said of Latin America, the Marxist concepts and terms have become natural components of social and literay discourse. This is chiefly being pursued by young academics seeking an escape from the empiricist-positivist or idealist-iconic models offered by conventional English criticism, thus de-Anglicising and indirectly decolonisng, the critical discourse.

Re-readings of canonical texts side by side with the discovery of buried and forgotten texts has certainly unleashed a lot of radical energy in the realm of criticism.Critics like B. Rajeevan, V. C. Sreejan, S. S. Sreekumar, E.V. Ramakrishnan, P. Udayakumar, V. Sanil, S. Saradakkutty, J. Devika, Dileep Menon, M. T. Ansari and others have been consistently rereading texts from various, mostly subaltern, points of view. They have been trying to expose the ideological determinaions that underlie representations, especially of dalits, Muslims, *adivasis* and women, in the texts they choose to re- read. The new readings of Sreenarayana Guru and C V Raman Pillai by P. Udayakumar, the reading of Pothery Kunhambu's *Saraswativijayam*, a dalit novel, by Dileep Menon, the readings of Chandu Menon by M. T. Ansari, the readings of some texts of Kumaran Asan by S. Saradakkutty and V. Sanil illustrate this trend. P. Udayakumar for example has looked at the evolution of the concept of the body in Sreenarayana as he moves from works like *Mananateetam, Siva Satakam* and *Indriya Vairagyam* to *Atmopadesa Satakam, Advaita Jeevitam* and *Suddhipanchakam*. Sreenarayana denies ontological status to the body, but gives it epistomological status and discovers a subtle body(*sookshmasareera*) within the gross body(*sthoola sareera*). The body can attain purity once it is liberated from the gross body. Then it will be capable of spiritual bliss. This is the moment where community enters Sreenarayana's system, for, the reforms within the communities – in education, economy, health etc. – enable societies to attain this bliss, as the material and spiritual arrangements need to be co-ordinated like the organs of a body to lead to enlightenment, to recall his statement in *Advaitajeevitam*.

Here he reminds us of Tirumular, the Tamil Saivite saint as well as Basava, the Kannada Saivite reformer both of whom accepted the interdependence of the body and the soul. It is the body that bears the organic marks of distinction in man; the caste marks and caste titles are an aberration that hide these organic markers. So there are only two castes among the humans – men and women. Sreenarayana thus views caste as a false distinction, religion as nothing more than a matter of opinion, and the community as the locus of concrete action. In 1916, Narayana declared that he does not belong to any caste or religion. Human community, he said, will be born only when false distinctions and hierarchies disappear. This was the basic principle of the Renaissance that was soon to transform the society in Kerala.

Dileep Menon's reading of *Saraswativijayam*, a novel by Pothery Kunhambu published in 1892, looks at Kunhambu's project closely to discover that initially he too had thought of reforming the Hindu society, but later abandoned it as impossible. The author, an Ezhava who was often called Pulayan Kunhambu for his concern for the Pulaya community, found that tradition is impervious to modernity. The novel is an example of the spatial delineation of issues of power, hierarchy and inequality as the characters traverse different territories of freedom and knowledge. Travel becomes a metaphor of individual redemption here as the cruel landlord, KuberanNamboodiri travels to Kasi, Marathan, the Pulaya protagonist travels to Madras and Subhadra,the Namboodiri's daughter falsely accused of extramarital relations and banished from her caste, travels to Kannoor to escape from the enclosed space of historical memory. Kuberan has a change of heart, Marathan converts to Christianity, studies law and becomes a judge, Subhadra too converts and becomes a teacher and gets reunited with her husband who too converts to Christianity. Christianity is the mediator of modernity in the text. Kunhambu did share the creative tension between the the possibility of an internal critique of Hinduism and the pragmatic and robust alternative of empowerment through colonial education, though finally he found that liberation is unattainable within the Hindu fold, a fact that Ambedkar too was to discover later though his choice was not Christianity, but Buddhism. *Saraswativijayam* is not a revenge novel, nor a conversion tract ; conversion here is a metaphor for the new possibilities opened up by colonialism and modernity. It may be noted that while elite thinkers like Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Dayanandasaraswati championed an internal critique of Hinduism and found habitation within reformed religion, most of the subaltern thinkers found a solution to caste inequality only in conversion.Sreenarayana was an exception, as, through a pilosophical inversion, he could free himself from all religions.

Romila Thapar has reread Kalidasa's *Abhijnana Sakuntalam* from a historical point of view to reveal the Orientalist determinations behind its reception. She has shown how Kalidasa's Sakuntala is delicate, shy, meek, faithful and unquestioning in her obedience, returning with tears from Dushyanta's court when he disowns her, as different from the Sakuntala of *Adiparva* in the Mahabharata where she is strong and independent, and boldly interrogates Dushyanta's sense of justice and decorum. She puts certain conditions even begore she enters into a *gandharva* relationship with the king. Kalidasa's description fits in very much with the romantic concept of the innocent forest virgin embarrassed by the awakening of desire. In fact there is a whole romantic opposition at work here betweeen the simple,picturesque ashram in the woods that represents rusticity and innocence and the splendid palace of the king that stands for the urban with its accent on power and cunning. Kalidasa's Sakuntala was the kind of ideal heroine that the romantics were looking for. Goethe describes her as 'a rustic girl', a 'child of nature' with elegant limbs and graceful undulating gait.Popuarised in the West through Monier Williams' English translation, from which the German translation was done by Georg Forster in 1791, *Abhijnana Sakuntalam* fitted very well with the Orientalist project of romanticising the East reflected equally well in ciolonial photography and the Company paintings. The Germans also exulted in the racial bonds between the ancient Indians and Europeans whom they considered 'Aryans' whatever that term stands for. For French Indologists like Sylvain Levy and Russian Indologists like Oldenberg, Sakuntala was part of their fantasy about India. She was the ideal Hindu woman also for the Indian middle class Nationalists who like the Orientalists bemoaned the 'fall' of the ideal Indian womanhood. Rabindranath Tagore also upheld Sakuntala, combining in his approach the

British Orientalist attitudes of the 19th century, the nascent nationalist sentiment and Victorian moralism. Romila Thapar upholds Shantaram's portrayal of Sakuntala in his film *Stree* as being faithful to her portrayal in the Mahabharata as also the contemporary interpretation one comes across in Nachiket Patwardhan's *Anant yatra*, that brings Sakuntala to modern Bombay where Dushyanta is a business executive. The film hints that any appreciation of the naïve and frail Sakuntala today can only be an escape from today's oppressive patriarchal urban reality.

Post-colonial readings, epecially informed by Edward Said's theoretical insights have helped unearth the colonial prejudices behind a lot of work on India – not literature alone, but also photographs and paintings. These interrogations, while at times reductive or eclectic, have helped make writers and readers conscious of the dangers of (mis) representation. At the same time the post-colonial theory makes certain assumptions that need to be reexamined. Arun P. Mukherjee has summed them up like this ('Some Uneasy Conjunctions', *Interrogating Post-colonialism Theory, Text, Context, ed.*:Harish Trivedi and Meenakshi Mukherjee, 1996): (a) The theory claims that the major theme of literatures from post-colonial societies is discursive resistance to the now absent coloniser. (b) It unproblematically assumes that the writers who write back to the centre are representing the people of their society authentically. (c) The theory downplays the difference between the settler colonial and those colonised in their home territories using the term 'colonised' for both of them. It trivializes the experience of those who suffered genocide and pauperisation under colonial rule, not to mention cultural deprivation. (d) In its use of terminology like 'the oppressed', 'the colonised peoples' and 'the indigenous' to describe post-colonial societies, the theory suppresses internal hierarchies and divisions in these societies. It does great disservice to the minorities in these societies by deflecting attention away from their oppression by using a unitary vocabulary which confers a 'subaltern' status on the entire post-colonial world disregarding the fact that it is ridden with hierarchies. This last erasure is particulrly dangerous as it glosses over the distinctions of class, caste, race and religion in these societies. I also feel that the post-colonialists often assume that history begins with colonialism which is exactly what the colonialists want us to believe. The paradigm has also been used by the right-wing to promote their agenda of a revival of pre-colonial practices and justify hierarchies like the varna system and even superstitious practices like astrology, *sati* (eg. Ashis Nandy) and nude worship (eg. U. R. Ananthamurthy). Another strange fact about its application is that only the Indian writing in English is considered to be post-colonial by the academics. It may be true about some works like those of Mulk Raj Anand, (*Untouchable, Coolie*) Khushwant Singh (*Train to Pakistan*), Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's Children, Shame*) or Kiran Nagarkar (*The Little Soldier*) while post-colonial reality is expressed with greater authenticity in language texts like *Kayar* (Thakazhi Shivasankara Pillai), *Dharmapuranam* (O.V. Vijayan), *Abhayarthikal, Marubhoomikal Undakunnathu* (Anand), *Bharatipura* (Ananthmurthy), *Kusumabale* (Devanoor Mahadeva) *Malapally* (U. Lakshmi narayana*), Karukku, Sangati* (Bama), *Kosla* (Bhalchandra Nemade), *Uchalya* (Laxman Gaikwad), *Upara* (Laxman Mane), *Akkarmashee* (Sharan Kumar Limbale) *Angaliyat* (Joseph Macwan), *Aranyer Adhikar, Agnigarbha* (Mahaswetadevi), *Parsa* (Gurdial Singh), *Maila Anchal* (Phaneeswar Nath Renu), *Tamas, Madhavi*(Bhishm Sahni) *Zindagi nama* (Krishna Sobti), *Kitne Pakistan* (Kamaleswar) *Iyaru Ingam* (Birendrakumar Bhattacharya) and *Aag ka Dariya* (Qurratul-ain Hyder) just to take a few random samples from novel alone. The post-colonialists also do not see the distinct ways in which the elite and the downtrodden reacted to colonialism – like Ambedkar and Sreenarayana Guru welcoming the reformative and egalitarian aspects of the colonial rule. They also fail to see the neo-colonial forces seeking hegemony in the post-colonial India, now masquerading as globalisation.

Said's formulations in *Orientalism* have also been challenged by a host of theoreticians. Aijaz Ahmed (*In Theory : Classes, Nations, Literature,* 1992*)* has shown how Said is silent about the modes by which the colonial subjects received, challenged, changed or rejected the Western conceptualisatuions about them.Patric Williams and Laura Chrisman(*Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory,* 1993) have also pointed to Said's neglect of the colonial subject's power of resistance. Sarah Mills (*Discourses of Difference,*1996) is rightly critical of Said's neglect of Gender: did the Western women share the Western man's fantasies about the

Oriental woman as the passive subject of desire? There are too other objections: historians feel that colonial discourse analysis tends to make large generalisations based on a limited number of largely literay texts. It also de-historicizes and treats all texts as synchronic as if they existed in an ahistorical, unchanging textual continuum. The textualism and idealism of colonial discourse analysis occurs at the expense of materialist historical inquiry and politicized understanding.

III

Feminist critics have also responded to the crisis by using gender as the organising principle of writing as well as reading.Feminist scholarship has retrieved a lot of forgotten or suppressed writing in the Indian languages done by women in the past, the most famous example being *Radhikasantwanam,* Muddupalani's Telugu text of the eighteenth century, proscribed by the British Raj and willed into oblivion by indigenous patriarchy including the nationalists as a frank, and hence threatening, expression of female desire. The patriarchal canons are being interrogated, myths revisioned, texts decoded and literary history revised. Susie Tharu and K. Lalita have traced in their introduction to the anthology *Women Writing in India, Sixth Century B. C to the Present* the evolution of women's writng in India across centuries. Uma Chakravarty, Vijaya Dabbe, Sonal Shukla, Madhu Kishwar, Leela Mullati, Parita Mukta, Vijaya Ramaswamy and others have explored the poetry of women saints like Lal Ded, Akka Mahadevi, Satyakka, Kadire Rammavve, Ayadakki Lakkamma, Muktayakka, Andal, Karaykkal Ammayar, Meerabai, Gangasati, Janabai and Bahinabai to show how Bhakti was to them a tool to escape gender distinction, patriarchal oppression and domestic confinement just as it was to the Buddhist nuns like Mutta, Ubbiri or Sumangalamata of the sixth century. God becomes a way of dissolving an otherwise imposible situation in these saints. Their worldly marriages, actual as well as potential, represent both the lure and the bondage of the world while their relationship to God represents a renunciation of the world and the woman's traditional roles in it. Like Susie finds the lyrics of *Terigatha* to be, their poems are epiphanic experiences in which the painful constructions of secular life fall away and the torment of feelings subsides as the peace and freedom of nirvana are attained. While they exult in their new life transformed by Bhakti, they also contrast it to the painful worlds they have left behind. These poets created an alternative family, resisted the oppressive social role imposed upon them by the male-dominated society and simultaneously created a parallel language of experience and emotion.

A lot of scholars and academics like Nabaneeta Dev Sen, Malashree Lal, Vrinda Nabbar, Brinda Bose, Ruth Vanita, Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, J.Devika, Anita Devasia, A. K. Jayasree and S. Saradakkutty have also done considerable research in women's discourses and the representation of women in literary texts by men. The complexity of gender construction in India is a challenge to the students of gender as it is overdetermined by other formations like class, caste, religion, regional cultures and languags, specific traditions, taboos, laws of marriage, sexual kinship and inheritance and the the contradictions between the country and the city and the feudal moral codes and the new roles popularisd by the indigenous and the Western media. Feminist enquiry in literary historiography means discovering the past from women's angle, questioning the existing modes of periodisation, examining past texts for feminine inscriptions, unburying the marginalised, relating literature to the differential articulation of the various levels of the superstructure and defining and explaining the breaks and continuities in the history of women's writing in the country. In literary theory it means challenging the patriarchal canons, deconstructing the phallocentric creative and critical discourse, defining the feminine literary texts in the Indian context, unearthing the ideological determinations that lay behind the reception and rejection of liteary texts in the different periods, relating their formal constituents to the specific environment and regional traditions, thus developing an indigenous semiotics that connects signs to their specific space and lineage, decoding gender as an organising principle of experience and relating forms of feminine articulation to the changing social, racial and conceptual permutations in our history – for example, the employment of dialects and images of domesticity in the quest for deliverance in the Bhakti period, the tactical redeployment of hegemonic discourses to constitute a new enlightened middle class female subject in the colonial-reformist period, the creation of new enunciative modalities and rhetorical strategies to articulate the gender-class nexus in the Progressivist writing and the caste-gender nexus in dalit writing, or the use of body-imagery, emphasis on female bonding and open defiance of the set norms and structures of writing in more recent, openly feminist, writing. While the Western feminist critical theories, right from Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Elaine Showalter, Kate Millet and Gilbert and Gubar to Helene Cixous, Annette Kolodny, Ellen Moer, Mary Ellman, Gayle Greene, Coppelia Kahn, Jane Flax, Julia Kristeva and Barbara Smith will certainly be of use, and have been used, in Indian feminist criticism, we may also come across some areas of resistance to Western theories in Indian literary practice. While the Bhakti poets provide a fine example to such resistance, contemporary texts, say of Ismat Chughtai, Kamala Das, Sara Joseph, Bama, Amrita Pritam, Mahasweta Devi, Krishna Sobti, Alka Saraogi, Arundhati Roy etc, again to take some fiction writers, also have a lot that is specifically Indian or regional about them that call for different critical strategies.

Eco-criticism is another response to the existing theories that focus entirely on the text without looking at its organic relationship with nature and the larger universe. Even though it was William Rueckert (*Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco-Criticism*, 1978) who introduced the term, it was Joseph Meeker's *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* (1974) that first defined the subject.According to Meeker, literay ecology was concerned with the biological themes appearing in literature. Its aim was also to discover the role of literature in human ecology. Literay works, he said, often reveal man's beliefs about the truth of natural processses and the cultural ideologies that have brought human race to the modern environmental crisis. Cherryl Glofelti who edited the first eco-criticism reader(1996) describes eco-criticism as an attempt to unravel the exchanges between nature and culture. It has one leg in literature and the other on earth: as a theoretical discourse it connects equally with human beings and non-human ones. Writers' world is not only the social world, but the ecosphere itself.Earth, she says, is at the centre of eco-criticism just as gender is at the centre of feminist critiism and class at that of Marxist criticism. Eco-Criticism according to Lawrence Buel, brings space into the critical agenda that has so far been confined to the theme, plot and characters. He sees it as an umbrella term that embraces various modes and approaches.It has also been called 'ego-criticism' (Sven Birkerts,*Only God can Make a Tree: The Joys and Sorrows of Eco-Criticism*) as it tries to discover what literature has to say about man's ego-centrism, greed and craze for wealth and power.Some eco-critics also draw strength from Engels' *Dialectics of Nature*, Raymond Williams's insights into the city-country contradictions and the works of Adorno, Walter Benjamin and other new Marxist thinkers. The anthology, *Haritaniroopanam Malayalathil* (Green Criticism In Malayalam) edited by G. Madhusoodanan carries 76 different samples of what can be broadly called eco-criticism in Malayalam-along with 16 theoretical pieces – that began to grow with the environmental awareness generated by the struggle against the proposed dam in the rainforests of the Silent Valley. The book carries applications of the concepts of eco-Marxism, eco-Feminism, eco-Ethics and eco-Spirituality in literay criticism.

The emergence of strong dalit writing in Marathi, Gujarati, Hindi,Punjabi, Telugu and Tamil has given rise to a dalit poetics that , though not fully defined, finds its expression in the works of D. R. Nagaraj, Daya Pawar, Arjun Dangle, Saran Kumar Limbale, Chandrakant Patil, Mulk Raj Anand, M. S. S. Pandyan, Cho. Dharman, G. Lakshmi Narasiah, Malay Dewanji, Arun. P. Mukherjee, S. P. Punalekar, A. Satyanarayana, Jyotsna Macwan, Kalpana Rentala, Eleanor Zelliot, K. K. Kochu, K.K. Baburaj and others. It was perhaps Sharad Patil's book in Marathi, *Abrahmani Sahityanche Saundaryasastra* that first launched an attack on Brahmin aesthetics and spoke of the need for a counter-poetics. Sharan Kumar Limbale in his book, *Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Literature* has attempted a critique of status – quoist Marathi aesthetics as also of the adulatory as well as negative criticism of dalit literature by the *savarna* critics. He points out that dalit literature is not meant to entertain the readers, but to provoke them into rethinking their society and its ethics and aesthetics. It is impossible to investigate the dalit writing with its rebellion, rejection and commitment with the established critical tools meant for the literature of acquiescence and consent. He does not agree with critics like Yadunath Thatte who want to enlarge the *rasa* theory to include revolt and cry as the tenth and eleventh *rasas*. What is needed is a new aesthetics that takes into account the differentness of dalit writing in content as well as form. Aestheticist criticism cannot digest the non-traditional stance of dalit literature. For that freedom will have to be recognised as an aesthetic value. The intensity of experience, the way the experience is socialised, its power to cross the boundaries of time and space – these are the standards Limbale proposes for the evaluation of dalit literature. D. R. Nagaraj – in his book, *The Flaming Feet: A Study of the Dalit Movement in India* – has gone deeper into the specifics of the dalit sensibility and dalit imagination and the problem of cultural memory in the context of the cosmologies of caste and the realism in Kannada fiction. He traces the cultural memory of the dalits to the subaltern, radical, traditions, folk cosmologies, rural myths and oral narratives which are getting lost in the oppressive process of sanskritization pursued by the Hindu revivalists. He looks at the cults of Madeswara and Manteswamy in Southern Karnataka as examples. He points out how the cultural paradigm of the nationalists had no place for the dalit cultural traditions and practices. The monolithic cultural model erected on the basis of Vedanta by the Hindu Right also precludes all the philosophic and cultural expressions of the dalits. Nagaraj makes a very insightful comparison between U.R. Anantha Murthy's *Samskara* and Devanoor Mahadeva's *Kusumabale* to show how caste has been an important factor in determining their modes of representation and imagination. *Samskara* gives the readers an insight into the self-image of the Brahmin by allowing them to see the world through the eyes of Pranesacharya whose attempts to break the system miserably fail as against that of Naranappa, his alter ego who completely breaks free of tradition and its taboos. This is also the failure of the novel as it cannot establish the sexual contact between the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin as a possible way to break free of the oppressive caste society. Realism frustrates the novel's radical ambitions. But *Kusumabale* rejects the notion of verifiable reality at the very outset and follows a folk narrative form. While *Samskara* ignores the socio-economic power structures thus turning its concern more metaphysical, *Kusumabale* counterposes the personal and the political realms of the caste structure, and finds that sexual contact like the one in *Samskara* can only lead to violence within the existing power structure.

Devanoor Mahadeva revives the dalit mode of imagination as when a cot tells a story and a lamp turns into a woman who comments on the events of the day. The narrative is open and works at multiple levels while *Samskara* is highly centred and has an ending that closes the narrative.

Dalit literature has created a new poetics by redrawing the map of literature, discovering and exploring a whole new continent of experience that had so far been left to darkness and silence, by helping literature overcome stagnation through a cleansing renewal, by disturbing the sterile complacency of the dominat social groups, by challenging their set modes of looking at reality and their stale habits of ordering knowledge, beauty and power and their established literary canons, bringing to focus marginalised or suppressed aspects of experience, vision, language and reality and forcing the community to refashion its tools and observe itself critically from a fresh and different angle. Dalit writing has thrown overboard classical virtues like propriety, balance, restraint and understatement, using a deliberately subversive diction that celebrates dalit values and challenges the middleclass notions of linguistic decency. It has renewed literay language by bringing in fresh words, usages and modes of imagination kept out by the so-called mainstream literature. The new tribal literature emerging in languages like Santali, Bodo, Bhili, Tenediae, Angami, Ao, Gondi, Mundari and others also share many of these characteristics while celebrating the tribal vision of the world and nature, demanding an alternative poetics.

There are also independent attempts like Bhalchandra Nemade's *Teeka Swayamvar* that uses a methodology drawn from Marathi literary history itself to describe the evolution of the Marathi novel, Namwar Singh's *Doosari Parampara* that speaks of a second tradition in Indian thought and litearture, E. V. Ramakrishnan's *Making It New*, a comparative study of modern poetry in Hindi, Marathi, Malayalam and Gujarati, Sisir Kumar Das's *History of Indian Literature* that tries to develop a history of Indian literature without ignoring the regional and linguistic differences and Ayyappa Paniker's *Indian Narratology* that seeks to found a theory of Indian narrative practices. I am in the process of exploring an alternative democratic poetics that I have temporarily called *sramanic* – as against the dominant *brahmanic* poetics – which alone can explain the second tradition in Indian literature that includes the tribal, oral and folk litearture, the literature of Bhakti and Sufi movements, Buddhist and Jain literary practices, anti-colonial literature, and contemporary subaltern writing done by women, tribals, dalits, socialist radicals and other dissenters to the system.

Let me conclude with a statement made by Terry Eagleton in his *Significance of Theory* that seems relevant to our discussion:

> Theory on a dramatic level happens when it is both possible and necessary for it to do so – when the traditional rationales which have silently underpinned our daily practices stand in danger of being discredited, and need either to be revised or discarded. This may come about for reasons internal to those practices, or because of a certain external pressure, or, more typically, because of a combination of both. Theory is just a practice forced into a new form of self-reflectiveness on account of certain grievous problems it has encountered.

Transferential/Intercultural Text after Buber, Derrida, Lyotard

GURBHAGAT SINGH

This paper proposes that we need to develop a distinct theory of the text that intends to interpret/encounter/interface diverse cultures. The signs of this text, called here *transferential,* may be structured around one, two, or several cultures. These signs are *dialogical* in the sense of Buber, i.e., they are shaped by I-Thou or I-It relationships and are "presential." The signs are *deferral* in the sense of Derrida as they function in absence, critical emptiness, shedding some cultural signifieds. The signs are *micronarratival* in the sense of Lyotard, as they assert "local" associations and decentre themselves from the metadiscourse of hegemonic cultures, both internal and external.

An authentic example of transferential text is Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* that cannot be understood with the poetics of the unicultural text. Nor can the novel *Kim* be elaborated with the system of a mere hegemony/subordination politics as theorized by Edward Said in his work *Orientalism.*

Kim is a story of going beyond one's cultural cogito. It was published in 1901 when British Imperialism had manipulated to its advantage the politics, economics and social network of India. The hero of this novel, Kim, plays the "Great Game" of power, sometimes "for its own sake" and sometimes as an instrument. He also genuinely participates in the beings of others and reciprocally allows them for enmeshing his own being. When he says to his friend Mahmood Ali, a Pathan horse trader: "What am I? Mussalman, Hindu, Jain or Buddhist? That is a hard knot."[1] Kim manifests his dialogical desire that runs parallel to game-playing. At another moment he is even more explicit to Ali: "Give me money and I will go to Benares and be with my lama again. I do not want to be a Sahib, and remember I *did* deliver thy message."[2]

Although Kim's alertness and capability of manoeuvring give him a feature of the imperial politics, yet he also becomes a "chela" to the "mad" Tibetan lama who is in search of a river that Buddha "broke" with his arrow. The river once found would heal the world. The lama believes: "Our earth never shook but once-upon the day that the Excellent One received Enlightenment."[3]

Kim, in his enthusiasm for the Buddhist miracle, is not only ready to relate to the lama, to stand in "dialogue" with the Eastern culture in the space of "betweenness" or *Zwischen*, as Martin Buber would say,[4] but also willing to unwill, or absent himself. He lets his cultural cogito (already mutilated because of his birth and growing up in India despite his Western parentage) be swept by this relationship. To use an expression of Derrida, Kim "suspends his accomplishment or fulfilment of 'desire' or will."[5] By opening himself up to others, Kim does not intend being a synthesis, but a witness to difference that questions and sizes up his cogito. The principle of this novel is a simultaneity of "presence" and "absence," or "dialogue" and difference, in which the chief character de-characters himself without losing his complete identity and without evolving a synthesis. This sort of open and differential witness, that Kim becomes, reflects a genuine curiosity, at that time, of the Western culture about the East, hidden behind the imperial politics. Kim, thus, also carries with him a signified related to a democratic or subaltern trend of knowing and meeting other cultures.

E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, published in 1924, is another vital transferential novel that is not anchored to a master narrative. After the first world war "all contemporary life," to Forster, seemed "crumbling." If the imperial *raj* with its contradictions, and the till then advancing civilization with its ongoing capitalist revolution looked to be directionless, its discourse also lost its magic. But simultaneously, under the post-war imperial compulsions for splitting the various communities and for accelerating the Indian economy to "export surplus" by forcibly selling the products of the peasant needed at home, India also did not remain an integral whole, nor did the discourse emanating from it retained its integrity. This rough historical moment shaped *A Passage to India*. It does not have the fluid gusto of the novel *Kim* to communicate its presence and relate to the other. It is rather fashioned by a stiff realism bordering on cynicism. All the agents of the novel try hard to crack each other. To convey differences needs very intense work. Forster epitomizes the difficulty of intercultural communication through the state of Fielding engaged in conversation: "Tangles like this still interrupted their interdiscourse. A pause in the wrong place, an intonation misunderstand, and a whole conversation went awry. Fielding had been startled, but how convey the difference?"[6]

The difficulty in conveying that is personal, cultural and political can result into a "muddle," as it happens in the case of Miss Adela Quested. Affected by a nervous crisis which is not just personal but a result of cultural and political mix up, she hallucinates to have been assaulted by Dr. Aziz in the Malabar caves. On realizing her illusion, she withdraws the charge and apologetically leaves India after breaking her engagement with Ronny Heaslop, a magistrate who believes: "I am out here to work, to hold this wretched country by force."[7]

But despite the cynical bent developed out of communication difficulty, the post-war circumstances of the *raj's* hegemony and consequent hostility towards the British, Forster significantly notes the capability of some people in both the cultures to push through these limitations. Ronny Heaslop's mother Mrs. Moore had a glimpse of India as a "spirit,"[8] as a "spiritual muddledom."[9] Dr. Aziz, after the unsettling Adela episode, still affectionately "holds" the hands of Ralph. While riding in the jungle with Fielding whom he had rejected once, he goes into a "semi-mystic" and "semi-sensuous" state.[10] He is happy to connect Fielding with Mrs. Moore's "sacred" name as he has married her daughter Stella.

The point to be understood is that in spite of the micrological existence of these characters and the entangled situation of some of them in their collapsing master discourse, Forster believes in the reality of a new rising consciousness among the people like Mrs. Moore, Mr. Fielding, Dr. Aziz, who are ready to shed their fixed signifieds, to open up to other cultures. They still like to remain absences - wavering signifier - like entities of a grammar or semiotic, but humanly evasive. Absence can also be a form of dialogue or perhaps an interested communication, pre-relational but definitely puncturing the unicultural cogito. This problematized cogito is best exemplified in this novel of Forster. The moving away from the centred cogito, is close to what Macherey and Derrida mean by "de-centring." If Nagarjuna's metaphysical concept of *anatta* is made sociological, the movement can also be termed *anatmic* (self-obliterative) and "co-dependent."

Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* published in 1960 is a novel in which the effort to interculturally communicate fails. Both Rama, an Indian Brahmin, and Madeline, a French Professor, do not realize that communication and centring around the master discourses of their cultures cannot lead to a lasting intimacy. Madeline is interested in "bridges," symbolizing the intention to cross over. She even adopts Buddhism but follows it as a Cartesian intelligence without letting it transform her whole being. Her original anchoring to her cultural discourse only changes its form in the new creed. Buddhism becomes another "explanation" to her. She begins to look at Rama as a body of "aggregates." Finally it leads to divorce although in the process she had reached the ecstatic moments of "love" proclaiming: "I become the serpent of sweetness, I am the song that leapeth."[12] Similarly Rama too had realized her as his own being: "But when I want to call her Madeline, I have to say Rama... her lips are mine turned inward, and what a sound she makes, the sound of a jungle doe."[13]

But in spite of these frenzied moments of intimacy, both Rama and Madeline, in the air of their cultures' given freedom, do not loosen up enough. The Cartesian intelligence of Madeline with its entire burden, and the Vedantic obsession of Rama with a fixation to see the principle of the Self in a human being, rather than her immediacy: the wholeness positioned in the present, end up in a pathological separation in which Madeline suggests to Rama to marry a young Indian brahmin girl. Rama wants to go back to his root-place "Travancore." The abnormally centred cogito of Rama withdraws from the movement towards the other. Madeline mystifies the other by veiling it with her own cultural *samskars*. Her effort to acquire a new signified fails. The simultaneous letting go of the cogito and emotion for modification and reintegration do not occur due to the anchoring of these characters to their original cultures.

The disanchoring of the cogito also takes place in a transferential text by stretching identity or commonality. The signifieds are brought to a point of undifferentiation. For instance in the *Spirit of the Sikh* written between 1927 and 1930 by Puran Singh, a major poet and intercultural writer of the Punjab, Goethe is made to present and elaborate the metaphysical vision of a Sikh by citing the various Sikh texts and a poem of Puran Singh. Puran Singh's intention is to swell only one major sign through the identity or acceptability of another culture's semiotic. The problematic of being "present" or "absent" or of both is replaced by unproblematicity. The intercultural communication becomes a deep sub-text to the surface chief text that has already received approval of the other. When Puran Singh makes Goethe say: "When thou comest and fillest me again with the rich and careless abundance of Thy boundedness, I wonder why I ever misunderstood anyone, even my so called foes, in this world of blind understanding and still more blind actions,"[14] Puran Singh brings the Christian cosmic Goethe of *Faust* in complete commensuration with the Sikh vision of the universe magically bypassing the problematic of cultural mediation. This magical disanchoring of the cogito was an historical necessity for Puran Singh, in the moment of repression and disinheriting politics of British imperialism.

In a period of political stress, especially when the author's genetic culture is not only waging an all – out struggle to liberate itself from the hegemonising culture but is also fascinated by some of its ontological explanations, the author produces a text in which the genetic culture as a sign sheds its conventional signified and borrows from the one hegemonising. Since in such a case only a part or one of the several signifieds is transferred, the assembled textual sign may be termed *partnymic* in contradistinction with the "metonymic" of Lacan and Jakobson. Ngugi's novel *Weep Not, Child* first published in 1964 falls in this category.

The novel is about the Mau Mau days of Kenya when the militant outfit was fighting against British imperialism. A young Kenyon Njoroge whose one brother had died in the war against Hitler and another was active with the militants, decides to defeat the Imperialism by using its knowledge institutions although at the end he discovers his way is cowardly and unfruitful. In the process, he accepts the entire myth of "promised land" and "chosen people" from the Bible and transposes it onto the black African culture of Kenya, just like his father Nogotho who once cried in a moment of anguish: "What happened O Murungu, to the land which you gave to us? Where O Creator, went our promised land?"[15] Njoroge strongly feels that "the Gukuyu people, whose land has been taken by white men, were no other than the children of Israel about whom he read in the Bible so, although all men were brothers, the black people had a special mission to the world because they were the chosen people of God."[16] In the partnymics of the predominantly confrontational signs the intention to absorb positive elements is communicated even in the situation of violent conflict.

Whether cultural transfer takes place through presence, absence, identity, or partnymics in the texts discussed, all these are ways aimed at setting up dialogue. But Clifford Geertz in his work has practised an interpretive or hermeneutic way of approaching other cultures. This hermeneutic involves, as he says in *Local Knowledge,* seeing "others as sharing a nature with ourselves," but also the fact that "the shapes of knowledge are always ineluctably local indivisible from the instruments and their encasements."[17] Explaining the otherness of local settings needs an "ability to construe" their symbolic systems. To Geertz this "understanding" is "more like grasping a proverb, catching an allusion, seeing a joke... than it is like achieving communion."[18] The disanchoring of the cogito in Geertz is intended through an interpretive construction of the local, although a critic like Vincent P. Pecora believes that Geertz does not succeed in his mission, and he remains bound to the Western Dionysian - Apollonian framework.[18] In other words, mere construing may still not loosen up the reductive connection with the interpreter's genetic master discourse.

Hermeneutic construction in the local, although not free from the subject-object perception, still pushes the anthropological text of Geertz towards being an operation of the anthropologist's sign with a minimal originary signified. The sign goes through maximum mediation and brings out "objectivity" or "understanding" of the "forms" and "inner lives" of the other with a nearly disanchored cogito.

Along with this epistemology of cultural communication, related to the problematic of disanchoring, another has been rising in the theory and practice of comparative literature. In Earl Miner's *Comparative Poetics* published in 1990, the objects of comparison have been theorized for presentation as "historically relative to a particular cultural complex."[19] By presenting themselves in their full genetic historicity to each other, even the antagonistic literatures or "enemies," begin to "complement each other," says Miner, quoting Etiemble.[20] In other words, the disanchored understanding is in fact a highly anchored understanding.

In brief, the paper proposes that as compared to the unicultural non-transferential texts, the transferential intercultural ones operate with more complex semiotic structures. Their signs function with the principles of presence, absence, identity, combining or isolating them according to their objects. Matters in them are pushed towards "dialogue," sometimes, not through commonality, but through historicized differences, spoken in "wholeness" or full cultural centring.

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Indian Literary History: The Dilemma between 'Ekanta' and 'Anekanta'

SWAPAN MAJUMDAR

A couple of years ago a book on Historiography had been published with a qualifying epithet 'rethinking' prefixed to it. Most of the contributions, I must admit, bore brilliant signs of truly new scholarship; the collection certainly deserved to be possessed. Yet at the same time, I cannot help but confess that I could not finally make out why the word 'historiography' had been used almost mandatorily in nearly all the essays included in the book. I genuinely felt that had the loaded term been replaced by the commonplace and simple word 'history', would it really make much difference? I would have to give up had somebody argued in the classical *nyaya* fashion that proper names – and titles or headers of articles are indeed equivalent to proper names – are not necessarily connotative; or had someone quoted the proverbial Shakespearean saying on 'name', I would have been left with no other alternative but to keep mum. Yet that would not have set my doubts at rest: are 'history' and 'historiography' mutually interchangeable synonymous terms? Is the suffix '-graphy' derived from '-graphia' a matter of mere ornamental use? One need not be a Greek scholar to appreciate that there exists at least one essential difference between the two; if 'history' is basically a chronological narrative, 'historiography' is more concerned with the processes involved in the act of the descriptive art itself. Methodology is the term used to denote the science or the sciences applied to delve into or deal with such processes.

But that is not the end of the problem. To adopt a method is not enough. The question is what should be the determinants for the choice of the method. A still greater, perhaps the most crucial problem is to decide whether should we accept one and only one method of investigation in historical research presupposing that there can be essentially one singular process of historical development. As the jurisdiction of a country's history was and still is determined by the territorial boundaries of a nation and the ethnological identity of its people, the linguistic participation was considered the sole criterion for the determination of its literature. But bi- or multi-lingualism may very well be a natural process rather than a tutored acculturation. The entire corpus of immigrant literatures may be cited as challenges to the notion of one-language one-literature position. In our very own India, more than half a dozen languages claim a text like the *Gitagovindam*, even if written in Sanskrit, as the origin of their literary tradition. How could a Mira composing her *bhajans* simultaneously in Rajasthani, Gujarati or *Awadhi*, or a Vidyapati composing his *kirtanas* in Brajbhasha and Bangla almost with equal felicity be confined as the sole preserve of a particular language-literature? With such preliminary apprehensions of the problem we may now move into the doubly questionable domain of literary historiography since the concept itself is considerably derived from similar formulations in the social sciences, history in particular. The problem is further accentuated when we consider a mosaic of literatures like the Indian, the European, the African or the Latin American ones almost as a national literature in the singular number.

II

Before I get into my main arguments, let me recall some of the features that I consider unique to Indian literature. Though India is not a continent like Africa or Europe, literatures produced in the country are no less varied and deserve to be compared not with any single component language-literature but with the entire ambit of literatures of those continents as a whole. Yet while adopting a holistic view of the Indian literatures, we shall have to reckon with the problem of uneven development of its literatures. When Vedic or Sanskrit dominated the northern part of the country, Tamil was the *lingua franca* in the Deccan. Awadhi-Hindi, Bangla, Kannada, Marathi, Malayalam or Urdu – to name only very few – grew prominent at different periods of time. To put it in terms of contemporary critical jargon, we may say, in the Indian literary polysystemic situation the location of a language-literature was extremely mobile both in the context of centre-periphery relationship mediated by dominance of power as well as in its size, volume and quality. The mobility, on the other hand, was operative both on the vertical as well as the horizontal planes. If there had been instances of upward movement, examples of downward filtration were not lacking either: the courtly and the popular, the city and the country, the sacred and the profane, the elite and the *bazar*, the *sadr* and the *andar* or the *aam* and the *khaas* often trespassed into others' territories. The power, again, was not necessarily conditioned and made up by its political dominance but often by the excellence of its literary authority it exerted. As a consequence, politically powerful periods in Indian history were not inevitably the most influential epochs in Indian literary history and the vice versa. For example, though Buddhism enjoyed great patronage from mighty royal powers, its literature in spite of their excellence and grace could not exert much great impact on the pan-Indian scale. On the other hand, Awadhi was basically a speech of the common people but its influences travelled beyond their linguistic zone without great royal support.

Another nagging problem in the understanding of Indian literary history cropped up with our coming in contact with the western literatures through the British intermediaries. As a matter of our infatuation with marching in step with the western modes of periodization almost on lines of dialectic progression, our literary historians started classifying and refashioning our narratives of history accordingly. What took the English literature more than two centuries to traverse the route from Milton's epic poetry through to the Romantic Movement, was covered in Bangla literature almost in three decades. The Renaissance, the Neo-Classic and the Romantic were all rolled into the same period frame. Though great care had been taken to retain chronological order, the sequences of thematic or qualitative aspects were messed up; Chayavad, Pragita kavya, Pragativad or Prayogvad overlapped considerably. In Bangla the ages of Madhusudan, Viharilal or the poets of the1930s were all dubbed as 'Modern' without defining any essential differences among them. It is needless to say that no temporal equivalence so far as the modes and qualities of literary productions are concerned could ever be established between one and the other literature. Even within the same linguistic area such as the vast Hindi speaking states or the erstwhile undivided Madras or Bombay, literary predilections – their preferences or priorities, conservatism or progressivism were at great variance. Our literary histories unfortunately could not take such features into reckoning, of trying to explain the reasons for these unevenness.

III

Buddhadeva Bose, the Founder-Chair of the first full-fledged department of Comparative Literature in Asia, remarked quite late in his career – in an altogether different context though – that "There isn't any thing called Indian Literature, whatever are there are but ten or twelve literatures written in different Indian languages." (The number referred is no less interesting!) It was not a strikingly distinct position either in those days. What is really striking about it is that they themselves would ungrudgingly subscribe to concepts like 'European' or 'Western' literature as a monolithic monument, a unit of literary corpus. Similarly almost all the histories of Indian Literatures until the publication of the integrated history by Sisirkumar Das (1991 & 1995) were virtually additive in structure. Even Sahitya Akademi which adopted its motto from Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's famous formulation "Indian Literature is one though written in different languages", continued to publish histories of single language-based literatures! In other words, language was still the sole identifier of a literature. The pioneer historians of Indian Literature took it for granted as an arithmetical summation of mutually exclusive entities, having independent courses of their respective development, even though all of them shared a common literary heritage drawn from the vedantas if not the Vedas proper, the epics or the puranas! The story as told by them suggested in a concealed manner that following the Islamic invasions and then finally the installation of the Muslim rule, not only was the cultural continuity disrupted, even emotional communications among them were almost snapped. Much to their convenience, such a fabrication matched pretty well with the European model where the medieval ages were considered as the 'dark' epochs. The new generation of Indian literary historians now, I believe, will hardly subscribe to such a position; on the contrary some of them may even go as far as to claim the Indian medieval era as one of great efflorescence – not only in literature but also with regard to other areas of artistic creativity. Beset with such problems, as a student of Indian literature, I propose to adapt the idea of *Syadvada* advanced by the Jain philosophers. *Syadvada* contains the seminal idea of *Anekanta* to which I have added my own antithetical derivation of the term *Ekanta* as a cognitive frame to Indian literary studies.

IV

The concepts of *Ekanta* or *Anekanta*, as I want to read them in the context of literature, have acquired multiple layers of connotations around them over the last few centuries. Apart from the inherently allied abstractions of a concept term, these words have also gathered around them an amount of vagueness due to expansion of the semantic fields. Initially, *Ekanta* meant the one and the ultimate, the one that leaves no space for any alternative or option. *Anekanta*, on the other hand, not only accepts possibilities of alternatives but almost insists also to explore these as optimum options to explain the innermost truth and reality of the situation as such. In that sense, the *Anekanta* approach may open up the probability not only of reading the text alone, it also invites to create subtexts with possibilities of all sorts of combinations. The ultimate reading finally emerges through a process of cancellation and simultaneously accommodation of the variant readings. While the *Ekanta* position is ultimately absolutist, assertive, authoritative and essentialist, the *Anekanta* stand is relativist, assimilative, conditional and adventitious. The *Anekantavadin* in literature would believe that any single object possesses an infinite number of characteristics and is located in a network of intertextual network that defy to be categorized in a single definition. And as every single object offers a number of alternatives and hence multiple choices, these require to be looked into from various coign of vantage and may elicit a plethora of conclusions. For him a text intrinsically is like an alexandrite stone that would dazzle with the light thrown on to it from any angle. Extrinsically it is engrafted in a setting of unfathomable combinations of relationships. Both these aspects represent facets of truth and reality, though all may be partial. Any critical position, similarly, is apt to be tentative and changeable. [Example of 'the jar': the earthen pot as well as a water container.] And that is why the inmost truth of literature is ever elusive and that precisely is the beauty of literature. Seen from the *Anekantavadin* point of view, literature may be born in a specific culture, but is never circumscribed to the confines of that culture alone. Literature breaks the frontiers superimposed on it by the culture it originated in.

Unfortunately, some social scientists and some literary critics hot on the trail of their counterparts have been reducing literature merely to the level of componential value in the study of society and culture. This has induced a new tendency among some of the contemporary Indian literary historians to fashion literary histories more as 'documents' rather than 'monuments' of creativity denying the autonomy of imagination and intuition in literary production. As a result, they have been trying to cast experiences gleaned from literature into a pre-fabricated mould of a preset thesis. I, for one, would still prefer to remain with such literary historians who would dare deploy various methods and tools to investigate into different classes and types of literature. I would even go to the extent of suggesting that even for different genres of the same period, a literary historian may have to adopt different methods and tools caring less for methodological uniformity that till the other day was considered the hallmark of a literary historian. My proposition may appear to be anarchic, but I believe, more effective.

It may sound rather strange but it is true that the early Bengali historians of literature from Ramgati Nyayaratna to Dinescandra Sen were in the main *Anekantavadins*. For the collation of materials and classification of the texts, the latter in particular adopted diverse methods in his works. Analysis he certainly did but the conclusions were left at the discretion of the readers. Even though he did not spell out in clearer terms, it transpires from his narrative methods that he did bring in extra-literary elements to highlight the creative temper of an individual or a period. He knew full well that oral literatures with their mind-boggling variants in recitals depending on the region they hailed from might pose a veritable problem for a literary historian. Therefore, he took upon himself the responsibility of having the oral scripts printed and endowed them with a kind of authenticity, dependability and longevity. The editorial principles adopted by Haraprasad Sastri, Vasantaranjan Ray, Dineschandra Sen, Bimanbihari Majumdar for old and medieval Bengali texts and those of the early modern period by Surendranath Sen, Sunitikumar Cattopadhyaya, Sajanikanta Das and others were different not because of their personal predilections, but because the texts themselves required different apparatus to ease out most of the problems. In brief, our predecessors knew the effectiveness of an *Anekantavadin* reading; we, in spite of a temporal advantage over them, have for all practical purposes moved towards an *Ekantavadin* position.

V

Biases of various kinds in literary historiography of India have stood on the way of developing literary history as literary criticism in many ways. By bias I do not mean simply valorizing one's own literature or favourite author. The worst kind of predisposition that still looms large in our scholarly world is its mesmerized by the western canons. Worry grips us if we do not have a tragedy according to Attic lines or if the notion of state is not compatible with that of *Samaj*. A Buddhadeva Bose was shocked to discover the decline of Tagore's reputation in West Europe, but was blissfully unaware of the rise in impact of his music and paintings on the Continent. Our literatures may pose problems not encountered in the West as much as we may be confronted with issues in western literatures not found in ours. That kind of absence is no fault of either.

An anti-religious bias seems to have become more fashionable among the academic circles these days. Frankly speaking, such self-styled secularists often try to denounce the role of religion in Indian society itself. Leaving aside scriptural texts, such efforts at sanitizing the morals of the people will lead to discarding of nearly the entire pre-modern literature of India – be that Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, Islamic, Sikh, Christian and hundreds of their corollaries. This is often flaunted as progressivism! If so, Rahul Sankrityayan, Damodar Dharmanand Koshambi or the author of *Shakuntala* or *Somnath*, Professor Romila Thapar are most certainly anti-progressives! The craze has reached so far that seminal religious texts that are compulsory readings as background to literary texts have almost been thrown out as junks irrespective of the religions to which they belong. I wonder how could any student of literature properly understand Vacanakaras or a Kabir, Jnanadeva or a Nanakdev, an *Anandamath* or *Sri Radha* or *Vishadsindhu* or a *Khwabnama*. The so-called secular bias has come up for all practical purposes as insurmountable walls at least in the study of Bangla literary history.

Western historians from Mill onwards had almost convinced us that Indians had no tradition of historical writings! In rage they forgot the names of *Rajtarangini* or the whole corpus of the *Tarikh, Tuzuk, Tawakat* texts. It was of course not expected of them that they would understand the intent of Rabindranath's celebrated article "A Vision of India's History" where he said in no unclear terms that India may not have histories written in the Herodotan canon, its literatures represent its truer history – a history that consists not in dates, but records its mental history. In fact, the West perhaps has not understood the Indian sense of time. They may superficially feel that ancient western time was cyclic gradually moving up, Indian time was linear and open ended. The former is astronomically computable, the latter cosmologically mythified. Unless the full import of the differences between the two perceptions of time are adequately comprehended, the dilemma between the *Ekanta* or so to say the exclusivist western model and that of the *Anekanta* or else the inclusivist Indian models would never be reconciled.

The realization is best revealed in Ajneya's famous essay "Samvatsar" translated as "Time's Hunt":

> – Time! But are all these times the one same time – the time in which the lords died, in which serfs ran, the boars were convulsed and in which I live?
>
> – And then the moment of monumental shock when I first entered the Chateau, first saw the pictures: in my

> experience it was in that moment that the stags died, the boars convulsed with agony; even the eighty, hundred, hundred and twenty-five years passed in that moment; in reality the pictured events themselves occurred in that moment and it is only through (the prejudice of) some previously gathered information that I have been able to set up a distance of time between those events and my experience. This distance on the one hand protects me against the experiential authenticity of the experience itself, on the other hand it gives it a historical authenticity, strengthening and modifying it through the evidence of all my experiences, their consecutiveness and the measure of the intervals between them – the intervals which, by providing a continuity or sense of duration for my experience of shock, also provide continuity, within a given frame, to the dying of the lords, the agony of the boars and the travail of the serfs. ...

Time: the experience. ...

> – Continuity – duration: the historical duration of having been dead, the existential duration of being alive; and then this – this realistic duration of being pictured dying, in which the flow of time has frozen. ...
>
> – But – *frozen*? When I thus illuminate it before you, does it not break into waves within you? What is still is the ultimate source of all movement, and what is in motion the permanent image of the unending stillness. ... And the *formulation in experience* of this dynamic interpenetration is the enduring challenge, which the creative artist must face unendingly.

This, in essence, is what the *Anekanta* approach proposes to do in relation to the sense of time and the act of creativity.

Theorizing the Nation : Constructions of "India" and "Indian Literature"

HARISH TRIVEDI

Author's Note: *This old article, which is in fact more of a review-essay and not even a proper article, was first published in* Indian Literature (Mar.-Apr. 1994) *as part of a written symposium titled "Literary Criticism: the New Challenges", and may seem a poor piece to offer in a volume dedicated to the memory of Sisir Kumar Das. However, it has some incidental significance of both a historical and a personal nature which may make it not a wholly unworthy inclusion.*

It was written not long after the publication in 1991 of Das saheb's magnum opus, A History of Indian Literature 1800-1910: Western Impact: Indian Response, *and just before the publication in 1995 of another volume of this History, for the period 1910-1956, with which I was officially associated and of which I had already had a partial preview. It was, as Das saheb himself said to me, one of the few notices in print of his work which had come out until then; everyone seemed to be using his* History, *he used to say with his familiar warm smile, but few would discuss or even acknowledge it! Another amused observation he often made was that even enlightened and distinguished readers of his* History *would often read only the parts* *relating to their own respective languages, and then come to him and complain that he had given more pages to some other language – e. g. Bengali!*

Das saheb not only read this essay as soon as it came out but it also became the excuse for long and repeated discussions between us (at our interminable weekly addas *in his house on Wednesday evenings) of his grand enterprise generally and of some particular issues specifically. He indulged me hugely and would encourage me to make rash and foolish observations about his* History, *so that we could then proceed to have a long free-wheeling discussion. But what I now personally treasure most of all as a fall-out of this article is that he picked on a little phrase from it which I had used to describe his work and he would often remind me of it, to my great but fully deserved embarrassment.*

This phrase occurs at the very beginning of section VI below, in which I much too briefly and inadequately refer to his History. *Having discussed earlier some highly (and even aridly) theoretical formulations of the "nation" by several other Indian critics, I began my discussion of Das saheb's* History *by saying:*

> *As if oblivious of this great debate but in fact deeply aware of and implicated in it, another Indian critic has meanwhile been engaged in producing a monumental work which bids fair to be the definitive statement on modern Indian literature for decades to come. This is Sisir Kumar Das, who has done nothing less than write the very* History of Indian Literature, *or at least two of its projected ten volumes which relate to the modern period...*

The little phrase that Das saheb never let me forget as long as he lived (and of course I am not going to forget as long as I live) was "As if oblivious..."! Though I did not of course intend anything like it, Das saheb laughingly implied that the phrase could possibly mean that he himself was not as theoretically oriented or inclined as some other critics whom I had named and discussed before! I kept protesting that I had said not "Oblivious" but "As if oblivious...," but Das saheb would not let me off the hook; he alluded to this phrase every once in a while and it became a running joke between us! What consoles me now is that another casual phrase of mine that he was also fond of quoting to my face, with somewhat greater approval, was: "Professor Das and I share much more than a microphone." This was how I had *once happened to begin my speech at a meeting with a group of visiting American academics at the University of Delhi where Das saheb and I were sitting next to each other, as we often did on such occasions, and after Professor Das himself had finished speaking and passed on the microphone to me.*

Some day soon, I hope I will be able to write a fuller and better piece on Professor Das's great achievement in judiciously defining and amply demonstrating just what Indian Literature is, especially to any number of theoretically over-determined and empirically under-informed doubting Thomases. Indeed, the truest tribute to Das saheb will be for some of us to attempt, as best we can, to extend and consolidate his magnificent pioneering work. Meanwhile, here is a poor preface to any kind of real endeavour, a sketchy and scrappy piece whose only value for me now lies in the fact that Das saheb himself had read it – and merrily taken me to task over it!

An eminent Indian critic, who has published a significant study in each of the diverse areas of Indo-Anglian fiction, Indian fiction, and mainstream English fiction, was recently hailed and acclaimed by a new admirer: "You are a national figure, you know!" The critic laughed as she made a modest disclaimer: "A 'national' figure? But haven't you heard that 'nation' is a bad word now?"

And so it is. It is certainly no compliment any more to call any person, place or thing a nation, national or nationalist – to list these cognates in an ascending order of opprobrium. Such is the state-of-art global (and therefore also Indian) criticism today that the "nation" has been written off, "India" is under severe interrogation, and "Indian Literature" is a category best deemed not to exist. In this whistle-stop tour, i.e. perfunctory *parikrama*, an attempt will be made merely to point to, rather than properly examine, some of the more important Indian critical monuments recently constructed on the grounds (or ruins?) of the "nation" in a wide variety of architectural idioms: feminist, Marxist, nativist/alter-nativist, swadeshi-indigenist, and good old Old Historicist.

I. Women and the Nation

To begin with what is probably the most widely hegemonic ideology of the day, feminism, we find in the second and final volume of the excellent anthology *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present* (1993) a 74-page Introduction titled "The Twentieth Century: Women Writing the Nation."[1] In this highly theoretical, trenchantly argued and ideologically anxious piece, the editors Susie Tharu and K. Lalita provide an overview of our post-colonial political history from 1947 to 1990. In their composite counter-narrative (or potted history), they tell us that by the late 1960s, "the Nehruvian project" of nation-building "had failed" (49). "Economic growth slackened ... Prices spiraled upward ..." etc. (47). As a result after 1977 "the nation [had] to be imagined anew" (49), following of course Benedict Anderson's formulation that nations are "imagined communities."

In a later sub-section, Tharu and Lalita ask directly: "What is a Nation?" and make the answer, *inter alia*, that "Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India* [is] perhaps the best known of the 'foundational fictions' of the Indian nation." This has implications, obviously, not only for the reality (cf. "fiction") of the Indian nation but also for its historic age for, as will be recalled, *The Discovery of India* was published less than half a century ago, in 1946. A further dehistoricization of India occurs when Tharu and Lalita tell us that they "understand the nation and nationality not as an essence, but as *a historically constituted terrain*" (p. 53; orig. emphasis). Their tendency to supplant the temporal processes of history with the spatial metaphor of "terrain" is reinforced by their constant use of the collocation "nation-space", until they make in conclusion the claim that their grand Introduction is "an initial step in the writing of a new cultural *geography* of India" (115; emphasis added). If nation is a fiction, it follows doesn't it that history must be geography!

But all this is incidental to the main thrust of the Tharu-Lalita argument that even this fictionally unreal and spatially blank nation was "engendered", i.e. created in terms of gender, by the fact that women (too?) wrote (or, in Homi Bhabha's seductive alliteration, narrated) the nation. But this leads to a problem. The numerous women whose writings Tharu and Lalita have put into their anthology are most of them seen to be rather more of nationalists than feminists. For example, probably the two greatest Hindi women writers of the 20th century, Subhadra Kumari Chauhan and Mahadevi Varma, were both thoroughgoing

Gandhian-Nehruvian nationalists both as writers and indeed as activists, though this fact does not come through adequately in the selections from their works in this anthology.

The way out, according to Tharu and Lalita, is to read the work of these nationalist women not as they wrote it or intended it to be read but, rather, "against the grain" (76, 110). This may be ideologically resourceful and enterprising, but does it not also constitute a systematic abuse of the grain quite as paradoxical and subjective as any since William Blake's, who saw eternity in (an admittedly different kind of) grain of sand? Further, if nationalist women writers are to be read against the grain, what is to stop readers of some other ideological persuasion from reading the latter-day self-consciously feminist writers in this anthology also against *their* grain?

To return to the nation, the crucial question that the argument put forward by Tharu and Lalita raises is: If women are indeed to write the nation, is it not imperative that the women and the nation co-exist at the same plane of (even notional or imagined) reality? If nation is a "fiction" but the women in it have to "address real tasks in a real world" (70, 116), how then will the twain meet and interact and mutually write and be written? How will the familiar and avowedly intractable theoretical problem of subjectivity vis-à-vis agency be resolved on this particular site, when it remains unresolved elsewhere? If we have to have "women", mustn't we in a package deal lump the "nation" as well, which they are presumably writing? And, to point out the obvious, if "women" figure in the title of this important anthology, isn't "India" equally present there as well? What else defines, delimits and holds together this collection of writings of over eleven hundred pages from over two and a half thousand years and eleven different languages, except that this whole historical and cultural-linguistic "terrain" is called "India"? Whether they like it not, the Tharu-Lalita anthology is one of the most impressive recent collections of "Indian Literature" and thus another strong and palpable proof of the existence of such an entity.[2]

II. Literature in Theory

Probably the most cogent and comprehensive antidote to the Tharu-Lalita debunking of the nation (which derives directly from a metropolitan Anglo-American subversion of the Third World nation, such as in the works of Benedict Anderson and of Fredric Jameson) is Aijaz Ahmad's *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London 1992; Bombay 1993). Aijaz Ahmad's theoretically sophisticated, ideologically committed, elaborately discriminating and rigorously lucid contemplation of the category of the nation had its origin in his quarrel in print with Fredric Jameson's characterization of all Third World literature as "national allegory." Jameson saw the nation as a category now obsolete in the First World but to be found atavistically in the Third World – rather like some harmful drugs which the First World safely banned from its own consumption long ago but then flooded the Third World with.

In his two-stage rejoinder, Aijaz Ahmad masterfully critiques and demolishes the First World characterization of nations like India collectively as the "Third World", and then proceeds to invest the notion of the nation itself with a radical ideological value which post-structuralist discourse had sought to drain it of. Considering in particular the implications of "Theory" for a cluster of questions forming around "empire, colony, nation, migrancy, post-coloniality, and so on" (3) Aijaz Ahmad too notes (but, unlike Tharu-Lalita, with complete disagreement and disapproval) the "post-structuralist debunking of all nations and nationalisms as mere myths of origin and as essentialist coercive totalizations" (12). His own work, on the other hand, as he puts it, "recognizes the actuality, even the necessity, of progressive and revolutionary kinds of nationalism, and it does not characterize nations and states as coercive entities *as such*." (11)

Such a recognition of the actuality (cf. Tharu-Lalita's "fiction") and even the necessity of the nation leads Aijaz Ahmad to consider in turn the probability, and even the desirability, of a "national" literature for and in India. His chapter on "'Indian Literature'; Notes Towards the Definition of a Category" is by his own admission "merely exploratory and provisional." But his becoming modesty and personal diffidence turn unwittingly into a methodological liability when he proceeds to lament at some length our lack of knowledge of genres and movements of Indian literature, and of adequate multilingual scholarship generally. "Can we, then", he asks, "in the present state of our knowledge, really speak of 'Indian literature as an object already there, available for theorization? ...

the present state of our empirical knowledge does not really warrant confident theorization on too broad a scale" (264-5).

There is perhaps a little distinction to be usefully made here between "our" knowledge and his knowledge,[3] but the larger answer to Aijaz Ahmad's objections must be that a literature does not exist primarily so as to be "available for... confident theorization." In any case, from what we have seen of recent critical trends (vide *Is there a Text in This Class?),* only a little textual knowledge suffices for many critics for theorization on a large scale. To prioritize theory over scholarship in such a way seems tantamount to saying that we cannot know because we do not know, and such a suggestion comes oddly from a critic who is not really a champion of Theory as much as its impassioned antagonist. For *In Theory* is in fact resolutely against much Theory (as the collocation of the title ironically hints), and is instead pragmatically, worthily and valiantly entrenched in Ideology.

With all his doubts and reservations, Aijaz Ahmad is an enthusiastic proponent of "nation" and of "Indian Literature" still. Indeed, he was in a review of his book rebuked by Rajeswari Sunder Rajan for even deigning to consider retrogressive categories such as "Indian Literature." Sunder Rajan's own recent contribution to the newly arisen metropolitan discipline of "Cultural Studies", *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Post-colonialism* (1993), falls outside the thematic purview of this discussion, purveying as it does "sensationalist" Indian cultural phenomena such as *sati,* rape, wife-murder and the reverse husband-murder (especially as depicted in the Hindi film *Khoon Bhari Maang),* in order to theorize and critique their popular representation. But even if incidentally, it also projects to the West an "India" which may initially appear to them to be only too plausible and predictable.

III. *Bhasha* and Nativisim

If Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, Aijaz Ahmad, and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan have one thing in common despite all their widely divergent positions and preoccupations (and Sunder Rajan's book indeed begins with a thoroughgoing demolition of the first volume of the Tharu-Lalita anthology!), it is that all three of these authors seem to be looking at India from the outside in. (One small but tell-tale indicator of this commonality of stance is that each of their works was first published in London or New York.) In contrast, we may now consider two versions of India and the West as viewed from the inside out, as it were, in recent books by G.N. Devy and by Jaidev, the one published from Bombay and the other from Shimla.

G.N. Devy's book *After Amnesia: Tradition and Change in Indian Literary Criticism* (1992), is nothing if not original. The bold and stunning newness of Devy's central (hypo)thesis here, his epigrammatic polemical style, his impressively wide and highly eclectic reading in both Sanskrit and Western poetics as well as in history and sociology, and the sense he exudes of patent moral earnestness have all contributed to him being awarded at the fledgling age of forty-three the Sahitya Akademi prize for the best book in English of 1993 in any genre – a year in which the age of the winner in Gujarati was sixty-nine, in Hindi eighty-one and in Sanskrit (perhaps aptly for our oldest language) ninety-one!

So what is Devy's new argument? He observes that Indian literary criticism is in such an utter state of bankruptcy because when it comes down to it, most Indian critics gravitate either towards imported Western aesthetic concepts or towards antiquated theories from Sanskrit poetics. In the process, they ignore totally our literary productions of the last thousand years, which have been in neither Sanskrit nor English but in the modern Indian languages, which are here called *bhashas*. (A felicitous image of this cultural polarity is to be found, as Nityananda Tiwari recently pointed out, in Ajneya's novel *Shekhar*, in which a female character is seen holding the *Meghadoot* in one hand and the *Four Quartets* in the other, as if nothing mattered in between!) Devy claims that our present critical debility is due to the fact that we have forgotten all about the traditions and the literary riches of our *bhashas*. We live in a state of amnesia, he says; if only we could remember and recall and revive, we will be all right. (Incidentally, to scrutinize Devy's arresting title, "*after* amnesia" would still mean to be in amnesia, wouldn't it; it's only *after recall* that things might change).

Ideologically speaking, Devy's diagnosis and cure of our critical malaise may seem to be a most attractive proposition. His project has the double advantage of displacing English on the one hand and Sanskrit on the other—both aptly called "father-tongues" by A.K. Ramanujan—and substituting them with the humble, homegrown, subaltern languages which have been actually in wide daily use in India, as our mother-tongues. (Devy's advocacy of the popular languages has, paradoxically, a high classicist, neo-orientalist air about it, with for example "Marathi" being spelt throughout with three different diacritical marks.) According to Devy's argument, such indigenization, or going back to our roots and to the ground-reality, can only vitalize and enrich and enable us.

Except that Devy's theory seems to have at its centre a crucial lacuna. Precisely what is it in the *bhashas* that we have forgotten and should now recall? Well, Devy forgets to tells us! Surely, we have never forgotten the *bhasha* literatures themselves, and as for any separate aesthetics or critical tradition in the *bhashas* as distinct from those in Sanskrit and English, it simply did not exist. The truth of the matter is that until the British came, all *bhasha* literature was written in the tradition of the good old Sanskrit aesthetics, mostly in close conformity with it as in the numerous retellings of the great Sanskrit epics or as in the Hindi *riti* (or neo-classical) period and occasionally perhaps also in partial resistance to it, but still very much under its broad umbrella. And after the arrival of the British, especially throughout the nineteenth century, there ensued an all-mighty struggle for the soul of *bhasha* literatures between the hallowed Sanskrit poetics, genres and literary models on the one hand and the newly glimpsed Western poetics, genres, and literary models on the other. This is a struggle which still continues in many ways though now somewhat abated, for most of our *bhasha* writers have by now already lost their souls one way or the other.

Though Devy points to the felt absence of a *bhasha* critical tradition, he offers little evidence to turn it into a presence. On the contrary, he cites examples of eminent writer-theorists such as Rajashekhara (10th century AD), who wrote creatively in a proto-*bhasha* but for expounding his critical theories still turned to the vital and dominant tradition and medium of Sanskrit (73). In terms of a critical tradition or poetics in the *bhashas*, Devy deserves credit for having discovered a hole, but he leaves it as big a hole as he found it, except perhaps a little more gaping and glaring.

So what is his amnesia all about? What is it that we have forgotten? Or have we even forgotten what we have forgotten?

Rather, it would appear that there was nothing to forget in the first place, and that the whole metaphor of "amnesia" (picked up, it appears, casually enough from a newspaper article at the last minute, after the book had been completed) is misplaced, misleading, and in the ultimate analysis, no more than a wishful construction, or rather, a construction of nativist wishfulness.

For "nativism" is another much valorized key-term in Devy's somewhat loose-limbed and all too brief "essay". By it, following Bhalachandra Nemade, Devy means to privilege a self-sufficient purity of each *bhasha,* uncontaminated by English. Such an isolationist-protectionist stance may be thought to be a dubious value in itself if not also a barring of the stable door after the horse has bolted. But Devy himself is utterly confident of its efficacy: "it is certain that literary criticism will benefit immensely if it cultivates a nativistic awareness of [the] Indian literary tradition" (123).

A little later, he equally strongly castigates all Indian attempts to theorize, and the alleged Indian "anxiety about the absence of theory. What Indian literature needs at present is a realistic historiography and not so much of a theoretical discussion" (124). It is ironical then that Devy's own work is rather more theoretical-speculative than historical-analytical, and not entirely "realistic" either as being at least at places distinctly spiritual and even erotic-mystical. For example: "The actual act of literary enjoyment can be compared to the moment of union between lovers or that between God and the seeker, for all these are modes of entering which also admit being entered into" (126). Anyhow, as Dilip Chitre said in his review of this "important" book, even "disagreeing with Devy and questioning his assumptions, examining his methodology and doubting his conclusions would be equally useful to students of literary culture."

Devy's ambitious plan to recover a lost tradition reminds one in some ways of a life-long quest by the foremost Hindi critic Namvar Singh to construct historically an alternative or "other" tradition of Hindi literature, as outlined in his own prolegomenon of a book, *Doosri Parampara ki Khoj* (1982; In Search of the Other Tradition). Beyond the obvious and broad similarity of project, there are however many crucial dissimilarities between these two works which are contrastively illuminating. For one thing, Namvar Singh seeks not to recall but to construct an alternative tradition, and it is a tradition of *creative* writing and not some presumed critical tradition. Besides, he does not regard all *bhasha* literature as being equally suitable to his project, for he recognizes that within the same *bhasha*, there are present several distinct strands of which some are more radical and vital than some others. Thus, of the Hindi *bhakti* poets, Kabir would be part of Namvar Singh's other tradition but Tulsi Das not, as being something of a pillar of the older Sanskrit-brahminical mainstream tradition. In modern times, similarly, the progressive Muktibodh will be to his purpose but hardly the modernist Ajneya.

Further, the kind of subaltern and popular tradition that Namvar Singh is looking for is not by definition a function of language, or of the *marga-desi or* Sanskrit-bhasha duality. Just as there are distinct and apparently opposed traditions within Hindi, so there are contrary strands within even Sanskrit. For Namvar Singh, these dichotomies begin, for example, with the earliest of Sanskrit writers, with Bhasa representing one end of the polarity and Kalidasa the other. Such a discrimination even within elite languages is echoed by Devy himself when, in the case of English, he cites with enthusiasm Terry Eagleton's observation that initially in England, English literature was read not by the elite, who read Greek and Latin, but by the mechanics and other working men and members of the lower classes: "English was literally the poor man's Classics" (qtd 104). Here is an example of the historical relativism of these matters, of how one man's *bhasha* may become another man's colonial poison.

IV. Pastiche and Authenticity

Another important work bearing on this great Indian critical debate on versions of Indianness and indigenous authenticity is Jaidev's *The Culture of Pastiche: Existential Aestheticism in the Contemporary Hindi Novel* (1993). In it are considered the works of four contemporary Hindi novelists all of whom are distinctly "modernist" and palpably Westernized in their sensibility. The mode in which their works are written is characterized by Jaidev as being "pastiche." This may at first seem odd, since in the current post-modernist terminology, pastiche is a term of approbation rather than of disapproval and debunking, as for Jaidev.

But this is not an unwitting inconsistency. For Jaidev knows his pastiche, or for that matter "intertextuality" as distinct from "inter-textuality", better than most. In a feat of taxonomy, he enumerates (Empson-like) seven "markers" of Western pastiche, and follows that up with seven quite different markers of Indian pastiche. Altogether, he seems to use the term as a euphemism for *"bandarpan"* (apishness) (12) or plagiarism, or worse. The high modernist Hindi writers he considers are in his view unconscious *pasticheurs* and their pastiche is deployed in the main to suggest false profundities. Their pastiche "usually occurs because Western influence overwhelms the writer", it seems self-conscious but is in fact naive, it is ahistorical and "superficial" and yet "takes itself most seriously", it is "elitist", and finally, it "embodies alienation" (43-44). In short, pastiche is for Jaidev a hold-all term with which to denounce all that he considers the most un-Indian and "alienated" and "wilfully estranged" in contemporary Hindi writing.

Of Jaidev's four chosen novelists, Nirmal Verma, whom many would name as the foremost Hindi novelist today, exists "in the neighbourhood of pastiche"; the fiction of Mridula Garg (who is somewhat out of her depth in this company anyhow but is included perhaps as the obligatory woman) illustrates "pastiche as pretence"; and the Beckett-like productions of Krishna Baldev Vaid represent "the unbearable tediousness of pastiche"–in a phrase which is of course itself pastiche. The one winner in this bleak cast is Mohan Rakesh, two novels by whom are read by Jaidev as being pastiche while at the same time "critiquing" pastiche.

Jaidev's book is a work as much of literary as of cultural criticism, and is imbued with a moral commitment and passion seldom found in academic discourse. His anxiety is centred on the question of homespun Indian authenticity vs. "arrogant" Westernized "folly" (182-3). It is not as if he is against all Western influence or interaction; his is not the nativism of the Nemade-Devy variety. What Jaidev asks for, though, is that an Indian writer who lays himself open to Western influence should not simply surrender or be seduced, but rather that he should "always be able to assimilate and internalize it" (183).

This is, of course, easier stipulated than achieved, and Jaidev's argument, impassioned as it is, is perhaps a trifle the less persuasive for indicting Verma, Garg and Vaid so severely while letting Rakesh off lightly on the basis of discriminations which sometimes seem to be distinctions without a difference. For example, one novel of Rakesh's is shown by Jaidev to incorporate unmistakable "structural and narrative" borrowings from Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and another novel, from Camus' *The Outsider.* Again, "there are so many similarities" between a Rakesh novel and Italo Calvino's *Smog* as to leave Jaidev himself baffled, for there did not then exist even an English translation of this novel for Rakesh to read! How proleptic can influence be! How far can pastiche go!

But perhaps it was the over-all pattern of Jaidev's argument which demanded that together with three unacceptable modernist existentialists, he must also have at least one good and desirable one, as a counterbalancing happy ending. (In defiance of chronology, Rakesh is here discussed the last.) In any case, it is not so much Rakesh who is the hero of Jaidev's deeply engaged and self-avowedly "idealistic" book, as it is Gandhi. If there is still any hope of a literary *Hind Swaraj,* its flame burns here.

V. The Common Pursuit

Jaidev is a university teacher of English as are also, among the authors surveyed here, Susie Tharu and G.N. Devy, and as Aijaz Ahmad too was until not too long ago. It is an indication of the state of Indian criticism now that all of them have shown in the books discussed here quite as keen and extensive an involvement with works of Indian literature written in the Indian languages as with any other literature. Of course, none of them has done so more intimately than Jaidev whose book deals solely with Hindi writers, whose works he quotes extensively in English translation as well as in the original in the *devanagari* script. Significantly, Jaidev's account of the penetration of Hindi literature by Western literature and ideas far outdistances in erudition and sophistication all studies in Hindi so far of the Western influence on the Hindi novel, including those by Vishwanath Mishra (1963) and Bharat Bhushan Agrawal (1971).

Indian creative writing in English, especially fiction, may have gone all global after Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh, but Indian critical writing in English seems on the other had to have become more local. It seems to be experiencing a kind of homecoming, in order to attempt to decolonize the Westernized Indian mind (to echo two widely influential titles by that most radical of decolonizers, Ngugi wa Thiong'o). In fact, further to reiterate Thiong'o, there now attaches a special responsibility to the English teacher in India, of teaching not only and narrowly English literature but also comparative/Indian literature, or, simply, Literature.

Such a responsibility is beginning to be fulfilled by some other English teachers in India, and not, as so far seen, through writings in English alone. There has for long been a cross-fertilized tradition in all the *bhashas* (though to use the word *bhasha* in discourse in English in this ethnic way seems also to ghettoize it and to degrade it from its full and proper status as "language") of English teachers writing creatively in an Indian language, right since colonial times. But a parallel trend of such a person also writing literary and cultural criticism in an Indian language is perhaps only now picking up momentum. One notable recent instance of such writing is a book titled *Bhoolne ke Viruddha* (1990) by Ramesh Chandra Shah. Its title translates into English as "Against Forgetting", which echoes the title-poem of a collection by Raghuvir Sahay: *Log Bhool Gaye Hain* (1987; People Have Forgotten). In the final eponymous essay in this book, Shah has for his theme the currently rampant *"anuvada-jeevi sanskriti"* i.e. a parasitic culture feeding on translation.

As would have been noticed, there is an uncanny anticipation here by Shah of the major concerns and even formulations of both Devy and Jaidev (both whose works appeared later). It is as if a multilingual, polyphonic, pan-Indian critical debate were going on, of remarkable vitality and vibrancy, in which many of the same issues were predominating and persistently resonating: the state of the nation that is India, and the Indianness of Indian Literature.

VI. A Master Narrative

As if oblivious of this great debate but in fact deeply aware of and implicated in it, another Indian critic has meanwhile been engaged in producing a monumental work which bids fair to be the definitive statement on modern Indian literature for decades to come. This is Sisir Kumar Das, who has done nothing less than write the very *History of Indian Literature*, or at least two of its projected ten volumes which relate to the modern period: *"Volume VIII:* Western *Impact: Indian Response, 1800-1910* (1991), and *Volume IX: Struggle for Freedom: Triumph and Tragedy, 1911-1956* (forthcoming). This is the most ambitious master narrative of the subject attempted in recent times, or perhaps ever, by anyone, and has been undertaken by Sisir Kumar Das in the full and complex knowledge that even as he espouses them, each of the key-terms of his seemingly simple title, "History", "Indian", and "Literature" has been under sceptical interrogation and deconstruction. (This is to say nothing of the overtly nationalistic epithet "Integrated" before "History", which was part of the title at the beginning of the project but has since been quietly deleted.)

Though the conception and scope of his enterprise may look quaintly Great-Victorian, Sisir Das's approach and procedure in it show a discriminating grasp of theoretical trends shiningly post-structuralist and (post-?)subaltern. Even an agnostic (if not a heretic) of the idea of Indian Literature such as Aijaz Ahmad makes a distinguished exception of the achievement of Sisir Das when he speaks of his "erudition and confidence, but also the sobriety and modesty", which are altogether "exemplary ... hence very chastening" (264).

If "Indian Literature" is still alive and well despite all its notorious fissures and fragmentations, and contradictions and inconsistencies, the place to find it is within Sisir Kumar Das's twin volumes. But this is not the occasion to praise and appraise this astounding piece of work–which incidentally has hardly at all been reviewed or critically noticed anywhere, perhaps because it has been published by that most self-effacing of publishers, the Sahitya Akademi! Come to think of that, on the occasion of the publication of the forthcoming Volume IX, it may not be a bad idea for another publication of the same Akademi, the journal *Indian Literature,* perhaps to organize a critical symposium exclusively devoted to Sisir Das's *History of Indian Literature*–or, as Tharu and Lalita may put it, to this veritable atlas or globe of our modern cultural geography.

NOTES

1. Full details of all the works discussed are to be found in the "Bibliography" below.
2. I have already addressed elsewhere (in my review "A Text for Our Times", *Indian Express,* 6 February 1994) some other important issues raised by this anthology, e.g. the correlation between Western and

Indian feminisms, and the gap between the editorial outwork in this anthology and the works themselves by the various women writers included in it.

3. To cite little slips from only a couple of pages (248-51), Miran (or Mira) did not write in three different languages but in only one and the same language, which was later variously claimed to be Rajasthani, Gujarati and Hindi by the respective partisans of these languages; unlike Telugu and Hindi, Bengali is notorious for its non-receptivity to translations from other Indian languages; and the *pada*, the *doha* and the *"barahmassa" (sc. barahmasa)* cannot all be described equally as "forms'", for while the first two are metrical forms, the last named is a thematic form or a sub-genre which, for all its later folk and popular associations, had a classical ancestry in works such as Kalidasa's *Ritu-Samhara*.

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Posts and Pasts: On Postcolonial Theory and Practice

ALFRED LOPEZ

It has become habitual in literary and cultural studies to hurl all that is troublesome or encumbering into the void of the "post-": post-modernism, post-colonialism, post-feminism, and so on. This is a practice that has become fantastically laden with meanings, but that also provides the soothing illusion that whatever is held to be really significant has either already happened or is yet to come. In the former case, such a reading casts the matter in question as aftermath or accessory, an appendix to that which the critic posits as already extant or formed, reified and arrested in the manner of that which can be studied and known in its finitude (post-modernism, for example, as that field secondary to, because dependent upon, modernism); in the latter case, it becomes part of a safely theorizable "future" whose true implications remain unconsidered, its impact blunted by the perceived lack of immediate impact upon the moment.

But living after the end of what has been a century of such 'posts'- what we might venture to dub "the post-century" - forces us to rethink these assumptions. Because that is precisely where the fearsome 'post-' (p)resides: *here*, in our actuality, with us. It is, as Hegel reminds us tirelessly in his Preface to *The Phenomenology* *of Spirit,* not a matter of projecting or imagining a future but of seeing the future which is already before us.[1] In this essay, then, I will be implicitly reading this sign of the 'post-' as that space or index of a future already glimpsed, coming into view in the form of an array of texts which, although not necessarily recognizable as a unified literary genre, style, movement, etc. together point to a horizon and a future.

One may of course already object here: "What future?" Or rather which the immediate problem with such a theory being the very multiplicity of national colonial experiences, to say nothing of individual variations across the range of ethnic, class, and gender distinctions, and the manifold responses to colonialism that will inevitably proceed from these. Each of these instances of colonization, this line of reasoning goes, comes with its own historical and cultural contingencies, and leaves behind its own legacy for colonial subjects to repress or confront or work through. Thus not only does the plural "futures" emerge as the more appropriate form, but "postcolonial" itself appears as a theoretical chimera: an at best unnecessary and at worst hindering nomenclature applied to a more or less randomly chosen and certainly incongruous group of discourses which would otherwise never appear together on a college syllabus, much less a bookshelf. Such critiques attack postcolonial studies as an ideology rich in abstraction but lacking in historical and cultural specificity. Postcolonial discourses, such critics assert, fail to empower precisely because of this drive to encompass all colonialisms within its polemic; thus Aijaz Ahmad regards postcolonialism as a term which "designates far too many things, all at once." (Ahmad 9)

While recognizing these and other shortcomings in what has come to be known collectively as "postcolonial studies", we must also acknowledge the extent to which such unaligned, irregular responses to colonialism together constitute a critique of the manifold injustices perpetrated upon the once- and still-colonized Third World by Western colonial powers. To argue, given this, that postcolonial discourses fail to address this or that historical instance of a colonial occupation in its local specificity is to miss the point entirely. To argue for something called "postcolonial studies" is not the same as claiming that all nations and peoples everywhere on the planet have collectively moved "beyond" imperialism in one fell swoop, or that there are not plenty of examples remaining in the world of colonial or neo-colonial regimes. But conversely, to fail to see any structural relation or kindred ideological impulses among these myriad instances of colonial oppression and national-liberation struggles is to miss the postcolonial forest for the nationalist trees. On the other hand, it is simply implausible that the term "postcolonial" is, as one recent conference speaker would have it, redundant or unjustified because "it quite erroneously suggests that something new and... too particularly depraved has taken place in human history." (Sareen 111) On the contrary, it is precisely *because* Alexander the Great is not Napoleon is not the British Raj that any postcolonial scholarship worthy of the name must be comparative, rather than ethnocentric or nationalist, in its approach.

Still, there remains for this contested ground of the postcolonial to name its referent. What exactly do we mean when we say that a given novel or painting or political theory is "postcolonial"? How appropriate is it to apply the term to some or all of these things? As Padmini Mongia asks, "Does the term refer to texts or practices, to psychological conditions or to concrete historical processes?" (Mongia 1) My own response to these and related questions, at the risk of seeming disingenuous, is "all of the above'. What establishes the postcolonial as a unity or heading, however tenuously or provisionally, is not a specific method, thesis, or object of analysis but a condition. That is, the discourses collectively known as 'postcolonial' share, if not a common history of colonization, then a condition or state of having been or presently being colonized, as well as the problem of how best to think of and live with that condition. These shared concerns constitute a broad context or outline for postcolonial studies as it emerges at the intersection of discourses such as nationalism, class, ethnicity, gender, language, economics, geography, and so on. All of these and more must be brought to bear on any consideration of the postcolonial, even if no single overarching theory can hope to do them all justice. To focus on one of these at the expense of others, to argue for a formulation of postcoloniality that "is" this and not that, or that attacks such studies for not centering around a particular ideology or method, is to forget how far and in what diverse forms the discourses of imperialism have themselves trafficked through the centuries. The postcolonial is, in this sense, certainly a response to the brute facts of colonization; but beyond that it also represents an analysis of its own relation to colonialism, a reckoning or coming-to-terms with what has happened (and is happening) under the banner of the colonial.

The development of these diverse discourses that would "speak to" the experiences of colonization and liberation obviously varies according to individual national and colonial histories, and within these by variations of class, gender, and so on. However, in terms of the organized study of these discourses we may identify a change in terminology that reflects an accompanying shift in their relation vis-a-vis the academy–a gradual but profound realignment of the epistemic categories within which such texts are taught and studied. As Meenakshi Mukherjee points out, the organization of courses and critical studies of non-English/non-American Anglophone texts under the heading of "Commonwealth Literature" dates back to the early 1960s, and allowed for the first time the study of such writers as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiongo, and Wilson Harris under the auspices of the English Department. (Mukherjee 5-6) In retrospect it is easy to see the limitations and inherent biases of such a categorization; aside from the obvious problem of the continued "conceptual centrality of England" implicit in the term (Mukherjee 6), such a framework only allowed for an oppositional approach in which the new writings always appeared within the context of a canonical–and colonial–forerunner: Naipaul and Conrad, Narayan and Forster, and so on.

From this phase springs a scholarship that would abandon this implicitly subservient 'Commonwealth' relation for a more combative, but still oppositional approach that would privilege a text's culturally-specific or indigenous elements over the influence of European aesthetics. While rightly demonstrating the role of postcolonial writings and writers in resisting and counteracting colonial domination, such approaches tend to privilege the more blatantly nativist or anti-colonial texts and writers (Achebe, Ngugi) at the expense of those who take a more ambivalent or cosmopolitan stance (Naipaul, Rushdie). This type of nativist or anti-colonial theory calls for a clean break with the West and all Eurocentric discourses, and the recovery of what Frantz Fanon called "a national culture which existed before the colonial era." (Fanon 209)

But such attempts to exhume a national identity prior to the forms left in the colonial wake are always limited to the reactive status of the anti-colonial, at best reconstructions from the scraps of pre-colonial culture not destroyed by the colonizer, and at worst facile idealizations that belie the hybridizations and complicities that colonial encounters inevitably produce. As Michael Gorra points out, critics/theorists such as Edward Said and Abdul JanMohamed tend "to settle for a Manichaeanism of their own, a too-easy reliance on binary distinctions between the center and the margin, the canonical and the noncanonical, relying on the tired vocabulary they would nevertheless destabilize."[2]

A more recent phase of postcolonial scholarship attempts to move beyond easy binaries of colonizer/colonized, to an examination of such essentialized categories and roles and the extent to which they constitute representations designed to perpetuate the superiority of the West and the subservience of its colonized and once colonized others. Such theorists as Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and Trinh Minh-ha, taking a cue from poststructuralist philosophy, have tended to focus their analyses on the role of language and writing specifically in the dissemination of colonial ideologies and the resistance to these. Such studies as Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* seek to apply this heightened awareness of the ambiguities and undecidabilities of Western thought and writing in general to interrogate the contradictions and inconsistencies inherent in colonial discourses. This type of analysis turns on what Bhabha calls "the separation from origins and essences" that characterize the postcolonial as it moves away from binary anti-colonialism to a more nuanced examination of the ways in which the positions of both colonizer and colonized are inwardly conflicted. Bhabha's work in particular tends toward terms such as "hybridity" and "mimicry" to help illustrate the inwardly-split subjectivity which he asserts as the mark and legacy of the colonial encounter; for Bhabha, the essential dominant or subservient role which is outwardly performed by a subject can always be read against the grain to reveal the subject's troubling self-awareness of the speciousness of their fictive role, carried out either in the name of colonial authority or in obedience to that authority. George Orwell's self-conscious colonist in "Shooting an Elephant" perfectly exemplifies this colonial ambivalence: "A sahib has got to act like a sahib.... He wears a mask, and *his* face grows to fit it." (Orwell and Angus 269) The colonized subject also wears a mask of acquiescence or resistance, love and identification or hatred and resistance. But each of these essentialized "masks" deconstruct themselves upon the colonized subject's realization that they are neither wholly apart-from nor a part-of the colonizing regime; that is, the fact of colonization brings with it the inevitable intermingling of cultural discourses between colonizing and colonized groups, and the impossibility that either one will emerge 'uncontaminated' by the other.

The once-colonized subject's dilemma, then, is on the one hand the impossibility of a complete break from the language, cultural practices, political institutions, etc. of the former regime, and on the other the impossibility of ever achieving full identification with it. This "separation from origins and essences" renders the once-colonized subject forever hybrid, an interstitial subjectivity that constantly and ambivalently negotiates between cultural imperatives; for Bhabha the result is a subject who is, culturally and ethnically, *"a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite"* (Bhabha 86). At best such a theorization would compel the once-colonized and -colonizing subject to turn away from reductive oppositions of self and other that would damn them to "contaminated" or 'mongrel' status, and toward a formulation of postcolonial subjectivity that would allow for a more empowering view of these successful negotiations of multiple ethnic and cultural imperatives: not 'neither', then, but 'both'. As Stuart Hall suggests, we must think in terms not simply of a multicultural society composed of multiple discreet identities, but rather of "new ethnicities"–multicultural individuals who embody the ongoing intermixture of cultural and racial identities that best defines the postcolonial world (Hall 223-27).

The appropriation of such terms as 'hybridity' and "syncretism" into the postcolonial nomenclature is itself telling as a reflection in the language of postcolonial studies' privileging of terms and subjectivities once shunned as signifying a secondary mongrel status. As Christopher Baime explains, as recently as the early 20th century these terms signified a lack of racial or ethnic 'purity' as a consequence of'contamination' with the subaltern colonized:

> In the conceptual world of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, clear cultural boundaries were essential for cementing identity, and expressed notions of difference and even superiority vis-a-vis other nations and cultures. In this world view, which encapsulates the essence of colonialism in both its, patemalistic and aggressive, exploitive manifestations, any suggestion of mingling and interchange was synonymous with dilution, deracination and breakdown. (Baime 9)

By contrast, current academic usage of both "syncretism", "hybridity" and related terms indicates a more dynamic view of cultural interchange; while sometimes overlooking the stark history of colonial domination and present inequalities of power among cultural/national groups, Baime, Robert Young and others count the reinterpretation of such terms among the few positive results of the otherwise appalling history of European colonization and cultural domination.

In literary terms, this new postcolonial discourse moves beyond both a subsidiary "Commonwealth" status and a nativist anti-colonialism to achieve a space within the erstwhile master's literature from which to write its own hybrid or syncretic identity. Such new postcolonial writings embody what Gilles Delleuze and Felix Guattari have, in their work on Franz Kafka, ironically called a "minor literature" which minority groups construct "within a major language."(Deleuze 16) Of course, Deleuze and Guattari bring their own poststructuralist sensitivity to bear on their opposition of the terms 'major/minor'. Their idea of a minority writer making a major contribution to the literature of their "adopted" language (in their case, the Czech Jew Kafka writing in German) borrows liberally from Jacques Derrida's notion of the 'supplement'; for Derrida, the 'supplement' is that element of a structure which, although regarded as secondary or negligible, can be demonstrated to be actually indispensable to the structure's integrity (slave labor as the 'supplement' within the structure of American and European capitalism, for example). Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the "minor literature" as an irreducible supplement to the "major" language clearly applies to the position of colonial and postcolonial writings as well. Although writers such as the Polish immigrant Joseph Conrad and the Anglo-Indian Salman Rushdie represent minorities within the Anglophone world, they could hardly have made more "major" contributions to English literature.

Although far from a unified movement, postcolonial studies can be said to demonstrate a certain trajectory in its writings and to share among its sundry manifestations certain ideas and concerns. This trajectory is not to be confused with any meta-narrative of development or as any sort of prescription or poetics; it does not offer any sort of schedule or other measurement of a national literature's "progress" toward postcolonial status. Nor does the commonality of certain broad-based concerns assume that all postcolonial national/cultural groups face the same cultural or historical conditions in their respective post-independence moments, or apply the same ideological conclusions or political solutions to their individual national problems. In my own work I seek to present this baggy monster of the postcolonial not as a finished product or reified object of study, but as very much a work-in-progress, a disparate group of cultural discourses that nevertheless ask some of the same questions and toil at similar tasks. I read and write the postcolonial as a condition, a set of historical and cultural contingencies; and I see postcolonial writings generally as less object than activity, a body of work that seeks to address these contingencies in the hope of finding ways of thinking and living in its unprecedented historical moment. In the broadest terms,then, the tasks of postcolonial writing are twofold: *a reckoning with the colonial past,* which primarily takes two forms: a) an acknowledgement and analysis of the cultural and historical pressures that colonization has brought to bear on once- and presently-colonized societies, and the manifold ways that the colonial legacy (what some would call the "neo-colonial") lingers into the post-independence moment and beyond, in effect constituting the postcolonial nation's inheritance of colonialism; and b) a revision or re-envisioning of the colonial history, through both a rereading and reinterpreting of canonical Western texts that produces a critique of their assumed "universal and transhistorical values" and exposes colonial literature's complicity in the building and maintaining of empire, thus allowing for interrogations of the colonizer's culture; (Lee 89) and *an analysis or articulation of postcolonial diasporas*, or diasporic communities that result from the scattering of indigenous peoples around the globe through the machinations and processes of colonialism and its aftermath. In terms of the postcolonial, however, 'diaspora' signifies identities constituted not in relation to an idealized 'homeland' compared to which they will always play a secondary or diluted role (the diaspora as somehow inferior culturally inferior to the population of the home country), but to an ongoing dynamic of heterogeneity and diversity and difference. This postcolonial conception of diaspora marks the limits of the historical categories and concepts of identity–citizenship, the nation, the community, and so on–and signifies the onset of a new formulation based on multiple (and often conflicting) subject positions and allegiances based on race, gender, and ethnicity. As Gorra points out, in postcolonial writings "the migrant is the emblematic figure of our times" (Gorra 171) because it is the transnational movement of displaced (and displacing) individuals and groups in the aftermath of colonization that has fueled the conditions now being recognized as postcolonial. In this postcolonial context the migrant's condition is not a lack of belonging, but rather an excess of allegiances and identifications–not 'neither' but 'both'.

Within these broadly-defined tasks, we may begin to read the multiplicity of nation- and community-specific objectives pertinent to their respective individual postcolonial contexts; and these readings necessarily run the gamut, from analyses of the material means of colonial and neo-colonial domination to more abstracted explorations of ontological relations to mastery, the epistemological implications of the 'post-', poststructurally-informed studies of linguistic ambivalence, and so on. The very proliferation of possible objects of study under the heading of the postcolonial, along with the dispersed and irregular nature of this burgeoning body of texts, my own efforts here are already qualified by the knowledge that the appearance of this "post-", arising multiply from the ashes of colonial discursive regimes that are themselves multiple, runs the risk of never being established as a unity, of never being able to produce its referent, of never being able to write its poetics or methodology or announce itself as a self-contained, delimited field of study. Michel Foucault has described most succinctly this condition of dispersion, of criticisms not reducible to a single position or school of thought yet efficacious in their interrogation of a range of institutions, discourses, and so on. Foucault identifies the recent period of criticism (in his immediate context, roughly 1955-1975) as a period characterized by what one might term the efficacy of dispersed and discontinuous offensives. There are a number of things I have in mind here. I am thinking, for example, where it was a case of undermining the function of psychiatric institutions, of that curious efficacy of localized anti-psychiatric discourses. These are discourses which you are well aware lacked and still lack any systematic principles of coordination of the kind that would have provided or might today provide a system of reference for them.... I believe that what this essentially local character of criticism indicates in reality is an autonomous, non-centralized kind of theoretical production, one that is to say whose validity is not dependent on the approval of established regimes of thought. (Foucault 79-81)

Lacking such a meta-narrative discourse or overarching telos or rhetoric, we can nevertheless begin to read the arrival of the postcolonial in such an array of non-aligned critiques of colonial and neo-colonial cultural imperatives: from the Guyanese novelist Wilson Harris and Jamaican writer Michelle Cliff, to the Martinican psychiatrist and revolutionary Frantz Fanon, to South Africans J.M. Coetzee and Breyten Breytenbach and Indians Rushdie and Arundhati Roy – as diverse a group of writings and writers as one could imagine, yet all inhabit in one way or another that ambivalent and contested index of the 'post-'.

NOTES

1. Hegel is, of course, concerned with a phenomenological description of human existence, which is to say existence as it, 'appears' *[erscheint]* or manifests itself. The text, then, is primarily concerned with the conscious subject or "consciousness" (let us not forget that "consciousness" *[Bewusstsein]* is Hegel's standard term for "man" [sic] in the *Phenomenology)* as it unfolds toward a final historical culmination and a 'post-historical' world.

   But of course Hegel writes *this* entire history of consciousness as a completely-rendered totality, having already 'seen' it all from a position of "Absolute Knowledge"; and thus he is able to set it all down in the form of the Hegelian system. Certainly I make no claims here to such a telos or meta-position; but what is significant here is less the veracity of this or that system than the fact of what we might call *&future-present* - that is, a future which is nevertheless 'present' to the philosopher, which may be glimpsed in advance of its coming-to-be.

2. Gorra, Michael. *After Empire: Scott. Naipaul, Rushdie* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1997) pp. 4-5. In the passage cited Gorra is specifically discussing Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993) and JanMohamed's *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa* (Amherst: U Mass P, 1983), among others; I would extend Gorra's claim to encompass an entire phase of/approach to postcolonial studies beginning arguably with Said's seminal work *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978) and breathing its last in *Culture and Imperialism.* perhaps the definitive study of English colonial literature's ideological unconscious. Subsequently cited as MG.

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Constructing a Theory of Indian Novels: Comparative Study with Reference to Gujarati, Hindi and Indian English Literatures

AVADHESH KUMAR SINGH

Let me also inject a few raisins into this tasty, may be tasteless for a few, dough of the obtaining discussion pertaining to Indian novels. I cannot lay claim that these raisins are mine, for I did not grow them. I picked them up from different distinguished reputations exercising my choice with care and responsibility.

All of us know that fruits do not bear fruits, plants do. Poetry breeds theories of poetry. Hence, a theory of the novels should also emanate from novels. So for constructing a theory of Indian novels, I have not gone to theorists but to the novels and novelists. For my own convenience I have gone to Indian novels in Hindi, Gujarati and English in particular to pick these raisins. Call me whatever you may but not an Eliotesque genius for this, for the genius steals. I acknowledge as I participate in this act of 'common pursuit'.

Conceptualizing or formulating a theory is a fascinating, but dangerous, if not fatal, exercise, more so in case of the Indian novel, available as it is in about two dozen languages, spread over more than a hundred years. The problem is compounded by the fact that the world of the Indian novel is a divided one, almost like that of Indian literature or our country itself, guided by the motto *E Pluribus Onum*. Further, there is no one theory of novel in whose crucible the Indian novel can be tested. An eclectic and multiple mixed genre like the novel, whose origins lie in romance, history, essay, biography, comic and sentimental drama, as Philip Stevick noted, remains unshared by any of the perceptual, structural, sociological, mythic or cultural criteria, for no criterion really defines the novel.[1] On top of it I, on my part, find myself a little constrained, as I shuffle and reshuffle views of distinguished scholars and my random ones as well, on the given topic on the base of my brief exposure to novels in Indian languages: Hindi, Gujarati and English in particular.

II

Promises of theorizing a concept of Indian novel are many and so are its problems. For one, the novel in our country is associated with its unfortunate fall, with our confrontation with the West in the middle of the 19th century. With no industrialization and middle class, that were instrumental in the growth of the novel in the West, the Indian middle class that emerged in the colonial era was not rooted like its western counterpart in its society. The English education system and its medium of instruction in particular had alienated the educated members of this urban middle class from the masses and even from their own families.[2] This class without consciousness of independence and democracy supported the colonizers, followed them and imported their models unlike the Americans who under the leadership of R.W. Emerson, against Margaret Fuller and her followers, stressed the need of forging native models in various fields e.g. mythology and scholarship instead of borrowing them from Europe. Since a majority of the readers of novel in India consisted of this 'soft' class, it is possible that their 'soft' tastes conditioned the Indian novel abounding with fantastic and supernatural incidents in the second half of the 19th century, with not so frequent considerations or even references of conflict between Indian and Western specificities, ethos and mores.

It was due to the curse of colonialism that for us the English novel remained for long synonymous with the western novel. And from the English novel only certain sort of works were available, as the majority of the middle-class readership, as was wont to, wallowed in works dealing with mystery, detective and superficial reality. It should therefore surprise none that works like G.W.N. Reynolds' *Mysteries of the Court of London* were the most popular novels and were translated in Indian languages like Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, and Marathi among others. If the readers of the time, of whom many would have been prospective novelists, could at all think beyond Reynolds, they landed, as colonialism would have it, upon the works of novelists like Mrs. Henry Wood. This affected the novel in India adversely, for under the anxiety of colonial influence English novel became the model for our novelists, and this model was based on third rate, cheap 'soft' novels and at best on the realistic English novels.[3] The choice, however, was ours. But that is how colonialism operates by conditioning and controlling the choice of the other.

III

I should not suggest here that all Indian novelists subscribed to the colonial model of English novel. In his 'The Novel of English Type and Indian Novel[4]' Namvar Singh discusses the Indian novelists who resisted the model of the English type novel as he exposes two faces of colonialism. Indian authors were anxiously attempting to write an English type novel, when English orientalists raved about Indian narratives like *Kadambari, Kathasaritsagar* and *Panchatantra.* He appreciates novelists like Bankimchandra, Fakir Mohan Senapati and Hazari Prasad Dwivedi who rejected the realistic English novel in favour of romances like *Kapalkundala, Durgeshnandini, Anandmath* and *Shyamaswapna* of the 19th century, which were the foundation stones of the Indian novel, not works like *Parikshaguru* (1828) by Lala Sri Niwas Das, the first novel of English-type in Hindi.

In rejection of the English-type novel, Namvar Singh sees rejection of colonialism. In North America, Hawthorne and Melville did it in *Scarlet Letter* and *Moby Dick* respectively which are commonly accepted even today as 'national allegories.' According to him the scenario of the Indian novel would have been different if Indians were exposed to works of novelists like Tolstoy and Balzac. Perhaps our racial identity and memory would have been safer than what it is and recognition of our tradition would have moulded our narrative creatively in a different way with different consequences,[5] he averred. Also he finds, among various Indian novels, 'an autobiography of Indian novel', an exquisite blending of old and new in its form. In the beginning a side-story of Miss Catherine like *Kadambari's* narrative but the plot is developed, in the words ofVyomkesh Shastri, in the modern style of dairy.[6]

Namvar Singh, more than a mere erudite critic that he is, engages himself on relevant issues in a refreshing manner as also in case of the Indian novel. Usually he leaves guidelines of a project for the generations to follow. He does the same here, for he stops short of giving us its clear picture. Why indulge in guessing and imagining about what could not be? The Indian novel for him, it seems, stands almost like Eugene O'Neill's Jamie in *Long Day's Journey into Night:*

> Look into my face. My name is Might-Have-Been
> I'm also No More, Too Late, Farewell.[7]

With a difference, of course, for the Indian novel is neither 'No More', nor 'Too Late', as it flourishes in various Indian languages in as diverse ways as the languages themselves.

Lothar Lutze, lionizing Namvar Singh in a letter to him for his critical art, craft and his contribution to Indian criticism with much justification in it, questioned his pro/positions that things would have been different if all Indian languages had accepted the term *Kadambari* for novel as Marathi did. He was right in saying so because nomenclatural difference would not have mattered much, for the thematic and formal considerations and compulsions for the Indian novel were to remain more or less the same in any case. Further, in his preference for 'romance' to realistic English type novel he keeps the American novel in mind. In the process he wishes substitution of one alien model of novel with another alien model. Notwithstanding these questions to which Namvar Singh will have his own answers, his intervention has given meaningful direction to the obtaining discussion about the Indian novel, as Indian literature or criticism, culture or tradition is being discussed, questioned, considered and reconsidered in our obtaining period.

IV

Ironically the novelists who strove to crave a specific niche for the Indian novel suffered at times at the hands of its own critics even in the so-called postcolonial era. Govardhanram Tripathi's Gujarati novel *Saraswatichandra* (1887), which failed to attract Namvar Singh's attention in course of his discussion of Indian novel, is a case in sight. It is an, if not the, Indian novel in Gujarati in its theme, its treatment in fictional terms, narrative techniques and in *weltanschauung*, as it portrays reality and ideals of Gujarati life and thereby ancient Indian life. However, an erudite critic of the stature of Suresh Joshi, who opened up Gujarati literature as such to the West, seems to be pained at the fact, as his *Kathopakathan* suggests, that in the year 1856 the Russian novel witnessed the creation of one of the masterpieces in the form of *Crime and Punishment*, whereas Gujarati had its first fumbling effort in *Karan Ghelo* to be followed among others by *Saraswatichandra*.[8] Without doubting Suresh Joshi's erudition and sincerity of feeling for Gujarati novel and literature, it has to be admitted that fevered with modernism, that he was, he had no sympathy for Tripathi's endeavour to resist colonial model and influence in his choice of theme, technique and vision in the heydays of colonialism. Tripathi states in the 'Introduction' of the first edition of his novel:

> The work is a *phoolgoonthant* (flowers knitted into a wreath) of more than one stories. Before the advent of the hero, the co-hero attracts our attention. It is against the conventions of maintaining and observing the unity of narrative prevalent in Europe. But by allowing the flow of multiple stories within one the divine laws are preserved. It is not the principal purpose of this work to preserve artificial conventions.

It was Suresh Joshi's prerogative to remain concerned with questions of style and technique, with formal criteria and fictional reality and prescribe them as constituents of the model of his own fictional workshop. But in the process he seems to overlook what Professor Nemade forwarded as one of the four principles of examining the Marathi novel which is true in case of novel in Indian languages:

> The present generation must have an unfailing nativistic awareness that the novel in Marathi is a creation of Marathi

> writers who, in turn, are products of the Marathi society. Further, the formalistic, unintelligent practice of' picking up all and sundry works of art from languages all over the world for a comparative assessment of artifacts in Marathi, a tendency rife in our criticism, has to be avoided. It is dangerous for criticism to enter the comparative field without making an in-depth study of the cultures compared. Culture is not a hot-house, but a soil-bound process; literature is not a theoretical construct but a living phenomenon.[10]

However, without heeding to Nemade's belated suggestions, Joshi measured the native Indian/Gujarati works in terms of the high modernistic standards leading to textual torture particularly in case of *Saraswatichandra,* for it is not in the realistic mode. In fact Tripathi's treatment of his material is in no way different from stories in non-realistic mode as elsewhere in India. Hence, no explanation is called for the charges of its being non-realistic, for it is so, as the novelist states in the 'Introduction' of the novel, in accordance with the native traditions. The novelist's statement quoted above deserves serious attention of critics who contradict themselves to good measure by stating that it is not a novel, for it is a non-realistic mode.

Further, in case of a novel like *Saraswatichandra* it has to be borne in mind that modernism, its criteria, its values and sensibility are the products of conditions and compulsions of modernization. Modernism in literature is an essence or smell of the dough of modernism, which is a consequence of modernization and the way it affected the West. Industrialization in our country, let us bear in our minds, has been slow and uneven, and so it remains in this so called post-colonial era, say nothing of it in the colonial 19th century. *Saraswatichandra,* on the other hand, is set in pre(non)industrial society unmarked by the hurried and unleisurely way of life. The novelist, therefore, is at liberty to control various trends of his stories and agents of action in them. The novelist is rooted in his native narrative technique, pattern and vision, not to the European realistic mode, and builds his own structures which allow him to capture the spider-web of human relationships and intricacies of labyrinths of life that constitute the core of life in his society. These structures will puzzle non-native or the West-intoxicated critic to whom they may appear loose or episodic. They would appear to have coherence only if they are examined in consonance with the focus of native experience.

Govardharnram Tripathi was one of the foremost Indian novelists who resisted colonial model and its influence. He avoided being a victim of the pathology that colonialism creates through its operations. Michael Madhusudan Dutt for example, far from resisting colonialism courted it, as he sighed for 'Albion's distant shore'. He pined:

For glory, or a nameless grave!
My father, mother, sister, all
Do love me and I love them too,
Yet off the tear-drops rush and fall
From my sad eyes like Winter's dew
And oh! I sigh for Albion's stand
As if she were my native land.[11]

Ironically, Tripathi instead of being appreciated for the courage and fortitude with which he resisted colonial pressures was subjected to vituperative criticism even in the post-colonial era in which creativity, freed from colonial influence, would have chosen models for itself, something that is denied in the colonial period in the majority of the cases. But so enormous has been the influence of Suresh Joshi that even today positions antithetical to his remain inconceivable in Gujarati unlike Marathi and Hindi among other Indian languages in which the ideology of modernism/formalism of critics like Mardhekar and Agyeya was questioned and countered leading to refreshing prosperity of creative and critical thought in these languages, for anti-thesis is the fountainhead of creative and critical dynamism. However, that was not to be, for strange are the ways of colonialism and no less subtle are its ways, extant as they remain, even in the post-colonial era. This diversion further proves how pernicious and detrimental to native creativity of an entire generation at times the most erudite and distinguished reputations may be.

V

The novel, however, is not an entirely alien literary genre for us.[12] The safest definition of the novel is that it is a long narrative in prose, and even in verse, for *The Golden Gate* glares at us. And if narrative is the criterion, India has been one of the earliest cradles of narrative. With India's encounter with the West, the narrative returned to India in the form of the novel. It was the 'return of the native'. Bhalchandra Nemade writes in this regard:

> The novel is not entirely an English form; its origin too is not English. If one were to search its origin, one would have to move from country to country and refer to various writers and works like *Decameron, Bendelloe, the Panchatantra* and so on. Max Muller has established through research how the *Panchatantra* fables were transformed while migrating from India to Iran, and then, through Baghdad and Constantinople, to all of Europe. Similarly Rawlinson has shed light on how Suvarnadevata in the original Hindu story later became Cinderella, and how literary forms all over carry an imprint of the culture of specific space and time to which they belong.[13]

Govardhanram Tripathi's concept of novel as a *phoolgoonthani* of more than one stories interests me for my purpose. He compares a story to a flower and the novel to a wreath suggesting comely composition of all stories in an organic whole in a novel. It must be remembered here that the stories in Indian tradition were meant to be told and heard, not read. The media — print and visual made the difference. Now the story is to be read and seen. Every Indian novelist has to be conscious of the tension between modern and indigenous traditions — be it story telling or story hearing or reading in a novel. Significantly, Tripathi's is not a case of timid subscription to western traditions or conventions. His insistence on native traditions and organic arrangement of stories and sub-stories in the plot of his novel suggests some standards for a theory of the novel. A novel may be conceived of as a *'shastra'* and a *sthalapurana,* according to Raja Rao. Vikram Seth adds to our understanding of a novel in his usual metaphorical manner with his own concepts of a novel. In his novel *A Suitable Boy,* a theory of the novel is strewn sporadically and camouflaged as the views of Amit, Seth's alter ego. His views regarding the novel come to us through his brother Dipankar:

> I remember, Amit Da, you once told me that Ganga was a model for your novel, with its tributaries and distributaries and so on, but it now strikes me that the analogy is even

> more apt than you thought it at the time. For ....You can still think of the new flow of your life as Brahmputra, traveling apparently in a different direction, but which will, by strange course yet unseen to us, surely merge with the broad Ganga of your imagination.[14]

By comparing a novel to the Ganga and thereafter to a "Bunyan Tree", Seth not only suggests its sacredness to his Indian mind but comments on its ontological positions related to its form, various stories and sub-stories. The metaphor of a banyan tree also aptly describes the novel. Like a banyan tree the novel sprouts, grows, spreads itself in different branches and roots which go under the ground, appear above the surface and then disappear again. They hang from above as branches and entering the ground they become roots and thus support the tree.

Seth employs another metaphor from the field of music. Amit tells Dr. Ila Chattopadhyaya and Lata during the course of their conversation on classical music:

> I've always felt that the performance of a raag resembles a novel....or least, the kind of novel I'm attempting to write... first you take one note and explore it for a while, then another to discover its possibilities, then perhaps you get to the dominant, and pause for a bit, and it's only gradually that the phrases begin to form and the tabla joins in the beat... and then the more brilliant improvisations and diversions begin, with the main theme returning from time to time, and finally it all speeds up and the excitement increases to a climax.[15]

Seth's concept of a novel reminds us of *Khayal* in which *aalap* (modulation of the voice in singing) continues for quite sometime. But no *raag* becomes complete merely because of its *aalap.* Along with *aalap,* it depends on *vilambit* (slow) *madhya* (middle) and *drut* (swift) also. The stream of narration moves quite slowly in the beginning — its state of *aalap* in the novel. Gradually a cluster of characters, chains of events and stories, unfold themselves and get entwined in a state of *vilambit* which continues for a considerable period in the middle, it seems that the novelist has lost control over some of his characters and incidents. The ease of the preceding period gives in to a dominant pace giving an impression of fictional anarchy. Suddenly in this stage of *drut* all complications lead to resolution.

What is significant in Seth's formulations about the novel is that he is trying to measure the novel in our own native terms — Ganga, *raag* and banyan tree. But it has to be admitted that Seth's, or for that matter of any critic's, concept of Indian novel can not be exclusive and prescriptive, as Seth's is for his own workshop particularly for his novel *A Suitable Boy*. The Indian novel has grown manifold and it is still growing, as it increasingly yearns to imbibe old and new, native and alien, and Indian and Western, in as many languages as we have in our country, including English. The question is: Did Seth subscribe to his own prescriptions in *A Suitable Boy?* Should he?

VI

Coming back to another cardinal concern of thematic preoccupation pertaining to the theory of the Indian novel, we find that neither the elusive intrinsic nature of the form of novel nor our varied situational scenario did deter our creative or critical genius from either expressing in this form or from formulating his views on it in his own ways. Munshi Premchand, the famous Indian novelist in Hindi, for instance, wrote two seminal essays on the novel "Upanyasa Rachana" *(Madhuri,* 23 October, 1922) and "Upanyasa" (*Samalochaka,* January 1925).[16] Both these essays compliment each other and may be called the manifesto of his fictional theories and practices. In the former essay he expresses his views regarding the composition of a novel and novel writing. He contests the prevailing perception regarding the novel as 'light literature'. He asserts that a novelist has to exercise his mental faculties in the same measure as a philosopher who writes a philosophical treatise. A prospective novelist has to choose a subject according to his own taste and nature and then construct his plot. Once the foundation of a novel has been laid, the novelist needs materials (mortar) to raise the building of the novel whose principal means are observation, experience, self-study, perceptive-vision, curiosity, and collection of ideas. He considers experience as the chief of all *mantras* or principles. But the experience gathered in artificial conditions can never be natural. The other means of experience is to feel for one's own feelings by putting oneself in different circumstances. He asks a new writer not to even pick up a pen without properly studying literature of different sorts. He pays special attention to plot and calls it "incidents that happen to the characters of a novel". But mere narration of the story does not make a novel interesting. The incidents should be made so lively with the help of imagination that they begin to reflect reality. He divides the conception *(kalpana)* of plot in six categories: (1) supernatural or miraculous *(adbhut)* as against the rules of nature like our kathá or old narrative stories; (2) detective and mysterious stories *(rahasaya)* like detective novels of Arthur C. Doyle; (3) portrayal of feelings and psychological states *(manobhavachitrana)* ; (4) analysis of characters and (5) articulation of experience of life that demand divine imagination along with immense ability to observe and introspect; (6) social or political reform. Premchand found the novels of the last sort abounding in his own times. Since his was the period of struggle, he found it difficult for the novelist to be indifferent and see injustice being inflicted on others. He accepts the fact that seeds of various reforms that have taken place in the last century in the West were sown by the novels, but finds it difficult to palate a novelist's role as a preacher because society finds preaching uninteresting and preachers despicable. What it wants is "entertainment and guidance" (24). Further, he mentions characteristics of a good plot as simplicity, originality, and liveliness *(rochakata)*. All these points notwithstanding Premchand makes them subservient to the principal role of the novelist i.e. to 'entertain his readers' (26).

Three years later he discussed some other aspects of a novel in his article "Upanayasa". Though it is a sequel to the earlier piece, yet its reading can precede the reading of its former counterpart. Both the articles put together form the nucleus of his views, if not his full-fledged theory of the novel, pertaining to the novel. He defines a novel in his later article as "the picture of human character. The quintessential element of literature is to shed light on human character and unfold its secrets". (33) Human characters have certain similarities and dissimilarities and it is the duty of a novelist to show similarities and dissimilarities and inseparability in diversities. Now the question that arises here is: should a novelist present these characters as they are after studying them or should he do some cutting and clipping, addition and deletion to make some changes in them to fulfill his purposes? This divides the novelists in two categories – idealists and realists. "A realist novelist presents characters and their reality in naked from ... Realism is a naked picture of our weaknesses, our contradictions and cruelties. In reality we lose our faith in human characters and we see only evil around us. Indubitably, realism is quite suitable for drawing attention to social evils... But when realism crosses the limits of propriety in portraying weaknesses, it becomes objectionable". (34-35) On the other hand, idealism, according to him, introduces such characters to us as are free from selfishness and passions, piteous in nature, unpragmatic, inadept in customary practices, and their simplicity leads to deception in the practical aspects of life. He states, "if realism opens our eyes, idealism takes us to some lovely place." (35) He warns the novelists against the portrayal of such characters as are mere idols of principles. "It is not difficult to imagine a god but difficult to impart life in the god," he avers. (35) The best novels are a harmonious blending of realism and idealism. He calls it "idealistic realism". A good novelist makes use of realism to make an idea living. He elaborates some of his positions regarding the function of the novel. In his first essay he considers entertainment and instruction as the duties of a novelist. But it "is not the duty of a literary writer to entertain his readers. That is the work of jugglers, jokers and fools. The position of the literary writer is higher than those of these people. He is our guide. He awakens our humanness, fills us with good feelings and broadens our vision." (36) He clearly states that the Indians are idealists. "Our ancient literature is stamped with idealism. Our ancient literature was not for mere entertainment. Its main purpose was self-purification along with entertainment." (36-37) The highest ideal of literature, according to him, is achieved when it is created for accomplishment of art. When it is written for propagating certain social, political, religious ideology, it falls from its pedestal. He has no problem with "Art for Art's Sake." But the most suitable time for this principle is that of happiness and prosperity in the country. In the days of national adversities and political thralldom it is difficult for a novelist to subscribe to art for art's Sake. "Yes, the novelist should try to see to it that his ideas are expressed indirectly, there should be no hindrance in the naturalness of the novel due to that idea..." (36).

Premchand was aware of the tradition of the Western novel and also of ancient Indian literary traditions. Though he wrote in the colonial period, he was intellectually independent enough to resist the temptation of rejecting every thing alien. He proposes "idealistic realism" as the principle of a novel, which may well be a principle of the Indian novel also, (though Indian in it may be a matter of debate, for Premchand was primarily concerned with the Hindi novel which is discernible in his discussion of the development of the Hindi novel in the later article) but does not lay down any formula for the blending of realism and idealism. Since idealism has been the quintessence of Indian mind and culture, he prioritizes it over realism. He was equally aware of the debate between the advocates of the schools of 'Art for Art's Sake' and 'Art for Life's Sake', and comes clear of it by relating their attitudinal orientation to social and national conditions and compulsions. These two essays on the novel in Indian critical context are as, relevant as Virginia Woolf's "Modern Fiction", written in 1919 coincidently around the time of Premchand's articles, heralding the writer's views and formal and thematic occupations and experimentation.

R.K. Narayan, on the other hand, wrote "How to write an Indian Novel", his first article published abroad, which appeared without a by – line in Punch. Let me quote a large portion from the article.

> First, think out a good title (something like "Fires of Hate" "Death of Love", "The Infatuated Raja," etc.), and add under it the sub-title that it is a "Novel of Indian life." You must beg, borrow or steal a good atlas, and, if you have not forgotten how to handle it, you can easily find out where India is, and mark on it with a red pencil the following important places: Bombay, Calcutta, Hyderabad, Himalayas, Ganges, Indus, and North-West Frontier. This will give you the necessary topographical knowledge. After that you must cultivate the acquaintance of the following words (with their spellings): Hindu, Moslem, Brahmin, Crocodile, Bengal, Tiger, Shikari, Dak Bungalow, Jungle, Great Mutiny, Sahib, English Men Out here, Maharajas, Gandhi, Congress, Child Marriage, Widows, Caste, My Servant, Chota Hazri, Tiffin. You can, with a little practice, learn to use these words in combination with the names of places you have already memorized from the atlas. Here is an important point that you must always remember.

> Never fail to use the words "Holy" and "Sacred" as often as possible. They can be used with almost every word in the list except Shikari, Dak Bungalow, English Men Out Here, Tiffin, Chota Hazari, and My Servant, with which you can always use the words "Mystery" and "Intrigue," a pair of words without which it would be absurd to dream of writing an Indian novel. Now you may commence writing. Only remember that you must take care not to say all that you feel like saying. Though you can defend yourself most times on the ground that India is a country of diversities, conflicts and contradictions, yet you must be on your guard in regard to a few elementary facts. For instance, Bombay is not governed by a Raja, nor is Calcutta, nor Madras, nor a great many parts of India, and there is no Maharaja of India. Don't as far as possible let elephants or tigers be seen in the streets of Bombay. You are likely to feel the greatest difficulty with the names of persons. If you mind appearing ridiculous, you must take a little trouble to learn a few Indian names, together with the districts to which they belong. In a recent Indian novel the author has given the name Chattophadhyaya to a Tamil coolie of Madras. A blunder like this will give you a black mark that will stick to you like a mole. It is something like naming a native of Southern France, Von Epp, or a pure Russian, Angus McBride, or a redblooded German, Scott O'Connor" (*Punch*, September 27, 1933).

In his typical ironic manner Narayan ridiculed intentions and fictional writings of such novelists who did or would indulge in formulaic writing by equaling 'Indian' to certain superficialities, like names of Indian cities, rivers, mountains and religions among others. He makes fun of those prospective writers who, in attempting an Indian novel, take considerable liberties with real India and write about it assuming that a large number of "readers will not have heard of India". In actual fact, an uncritical adherence to these prescriptions may lead to a pseudo-Indian novel but not to an Indian novel. The Novel is associated with the middle class and democracy which have dumped monarchy and the Rajas into the dust – bin of the past. A novelist's preoccupation with the Rajas would perpetuate feudal social structures, and mere generous garnishing of a novel with Indian details, its sub-titling as 'Novel of Indian Life', will not make it Indian. Narayan with his manual of writing an 'Indian' novel warns the novelists and even those of us who intend to frame a theory of the Indian novel against certain wrong assumptions and pitfalls that would attend such pretentious rather than fictional endeavors.

VII

In his article "The March of the Indian Novel" (*The Sunday Times* 1.5.1994, p.8) Mulk Raj Anand considered the Indian novel on the basis of its thematic transition from one period to the other. He began with Bankimchandra Chatterjee whose *Anandamath* and *Krishnakanter Will* dealt with the Indian freedom movement and familiar relations of big landlords. After Bankim, Tagore's *Gora* reflected the early national concerns in the twentieth century. After him, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's novels dealt with lower middle class *babus* and Bibhuti Bhushan Bandopadhyay's *Pather Panchali* with the rural life of Bengal. The torch then passes on to Prem Chand whose *Godan* is about a village and Anand's about untouchables, Shivram Karanth's about outcastes, Yashpal's about political workers, Amrit Lal Nagar's about the mutiny, Phanishwar Nath Renu's about the oppressed peasantry of Bihar, Ismat Chughtai's about the women of Uttar Pradesh, Krishan Chander's about the lower middle life in Punjab and Qurratulain Hyder's about the middle class women in North India.

After the predominantly Indian concerns of the 1930s and 40s and indirectly the upsurge against the imperialists, Anand found the mantle of post-independence Indian novel in the hands of women writers, urging emancipation for themselves and their womankind, like Kamala Markandaya, Kamala Das, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal and Uma Vasudevan. He saw it also in the novels of other writers like R.K. Narayan (*Dark Room*) and in his novel *Gauri*.

Anand's hill and valley view of the Indian novel, characterized by his subjective selection of novels from Indian languages, on the basis of thematic preoccupations of the Indian novelists, comprehensive though it may seem, lacked in adequacy as was expected from a keen observer and an active participant in the march of the Indian novel, for he ignored Raja Rao altogether. Of all the Indian novelists in the first half of the century Raja Rao was more conscious and articulate of/about Indianness 'distinctive as it is from English' in its perception of the world, its vision and in its ways of telling tales about it, as he remarked in the 'Foreword' of *Kanthapura*. "We can not write like the English. We should not. We can not write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us... We, in India. think quickly, we talk quickly, and when we move we move quickly. We tell one interminable tale. Episode follows episode, and when our thoughts stop our breath stops, and we move on to another thought. This was and still is the ordinary style of our story telling".[17]

Raja Rao's views on the novel constitute the core of Indian novel. Yet Anand's 'march' of the Indian novel refuses to take notice of Raja Rao and his work. Perhaps he was too close to him as part of the 'Triumvirate' of the Indian novel in English. Further, in 1994 Anand stops well before the 1980's and the compelling crop of the new voices of Indian novel in English, not to speak of major fictional works in Indian languages.

Moreover, Raja Rao insists on the specificity of the Indian novel focussing on the question of language, the Indian way of perceiving the world, life, and of weaving and telling tales of this life. In the process he suggests plurality of voices, for the distinctive Indian way of life, living and articulation is neither exclusive nor homogeneous. The Indian English novel though written in English is different from English as it was after our exposure to the world, the West in particular. It is inconceivable to write only as Indians. But what is more important to note is the fact that there is nothing like standard Indian English. Within India there are as many englishes as, if not the dialects, the languages in India. In a certain sense he leaves sufficient, space for the succeeding voices like Desai's *hatterresque*, Raushdie's *Chutney* and the 'Amazing mix, the English' of the generation of Agastaya of Upamanyu Chatterjee that does not oil its hair'. Rao's own concern with Indian themes and quest for the form of novel which according to him culminated in *The Cat and Shakespeare* is an illustration of different ways of practicing a (his own) theory of the Indian novel.

VIII

More than a century and a decade ago Bharatendu Harishchandra, one of the precursors of the renaissance in Hindi, was pained at the fact that good novels were not being written in Hindi, as they were in Bengali or Marathi. He himself wanted to fill in the void.

He had begun writing a novel which he could not complete because of his premature death at the age of 35. The title of his novel is available to us. What is left unfinished by a distinguished writer is no way less significant than his 'finished' work. The title of that novel is *Kuchh Aap Beeti Kuchh Jug Beeti* (Some Things Self-Experienced and the Others Experienced by the World.). This instance succinctly sums up the thematic preoccupations of the Indian novelists. It may be true in case of other novelists in other languages. Apart from the title of this unwritten novel, the title of Yashpal's novel in Hindi *Meri Teri Uski Baat* (My, Your and His/Her Matter) also sums up the thematic preoccupation of a novel, for thematically speaking a novel is nothing, if not a discourse about us (her/him) and others (them) and the relationship between them. These statements however underscore the insistence of the Indian mind on the fact that mere self-experience is not enough. Indian novelists have to dovetail, as some of them have done in their works, their personal and impersonal experience into one, as they narrate and re-narrate their community and country and also their gender in their works, though quite a few of the Indian novelists, e.g., Agyeya and Jainendra in Hindi and Suresh Joshi and Harindra Dave in Gujarati among others experimented with the psychological novel focusing on the self of the character(s). But the Western experiences like alienation and *geworfenheit ins dasein* are not as pervasive and deep in India as in the West. In a society like ours so many strong and delicate, visible and invisible strings of relations operate at different levels that they make absolute alienation almost impossible. Community for instance, offers one such set of relationships. And unsurprisingly the community emerges as one of the principal protagonists in contemporary Indian novel particularly in English. The Indian novelists like Firdaus Kanga, Farroukh Dhondy, and Rohinton Mistry renarrate the fears and anxieties, hopes and aspirations of their Parsee community, and Allan Sealy of his Anglo-Indian community. However, it has to be admitted that the Indian novel in English remains largely metro-based, and the works of Indian women novelists lack in diversity and perspicuity of their counterparts in different Indian languages like Qurratulain Hyder, Mahashweta Devi, Krishna Sobti, Kundanika Kapadia, Maitrayee Pushpa or Alka Saraogi to add a new name, despite the claims of

Rushdie in his (in)famous "introduction to *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing* 1947-97.[18] Bharatendu does help us in forming our theory of the Indian novel. But he seems to be influenced by the realistic model of the novel. But where shall we keep the fantastic in his scheme of the self or of the world? G.M. Tripathi was conscious of the limitations of the realistic novel, as we discussed earlier. Nirmal Verma, a contemporary Indian novelist of much repute in Hindi, has something pertinent to say in this regard, "The significance of the novel lies not in reality. It is contained in the process of encompassing it and in the inner guiding force of organization".[19] Bharatendu insisted on thematic, Tripathi on native narrative and Nirmal Verma, almost after a century, on the formal aspects of the novel. A theory can be constructed by picking raisins suitable for our purpose from all of them.

Theorizing is not defining. Defining is limiting, whereas theorizing is seeing. Indian novelists have to 'see' multiple-layered Indian reality or realities, and the critics have to see if these layers of realities are explored and examined fictionally in terms of their scope and depth. A theory or theories of novel in India should reflect the multi-layered Indian reality. Different as it is from other societies and social realities, the Indian novel should reflect it truly and in totality. And every theorist of the Indian novel has to keep this in view before embarking on the task of formulating criteria for judging the Indian novel. The problem that some of us have with the contemporary Indian novel is that it has not striven to engage itself seriously with different layers and facets of Indian reality. It is more or less "Metro Novel", of the metro people, by the metro people and for the metro people. And the metros are not India. The novel in the other Indian languages without ignoring the metros has tried to engage itself with the Indian village, Indian lower, and even lowest, class and different problems and perils of existence in the recesses of the Indian society.

Our endeavors to reach out for a concept of the novel have led us to thematological studies also, for it can help us in determining the ever elusive 'Indianness' of Indian novels and give empirical evidence to authenticate the concept of the Indian novel. For instance, to Ruth Jhabvala an Indian novel would be "bits of prose, poetry, anecdotes, lots of philosophisizing and musing, and oblique kinds of wits, and an ultimate surrender, a sinking back into formlessness, into eternity..".[20] However, most of our ventures to enumerate motifs and points of views like experience of life, love and truth as manifested in different works, or locate quintessence of Indianness in themes, structures and narration, or enlist such works as subscribing to them and un/dis-covering an integrated literary term of novel on these bases, do not help us beyond a limit, for Indianness is irreducible to a certain set of themes, as it is essentially inclusive and assimilative. Hence, it is not something static or fixed but dynamic. Its all embracing inclusiveness frustrates enumerators' designs and questions their validity as well. The attitude of a novelist in his/her work(s) towards India and Indian realities or what Farrukh Dhondy calls "Hindustani chaal"[21] (Hindustani gait) should determine the genuineness of concerns of (a) novelist(s) towards the chosen constituency and not the choice of theme, setting, locale or nomenclature of places and character.

IX

A theory is a construct. And no construct is politically innocent. It is fraught with the dangers of being exclusive and prescriptive. More so in case of the Indian English novel, for it imagines an 'imagined community' i.e. India. To take the case of the Indian English novelists it is their (Indian English novelists) prerogatives to imagine Indian, the way they deem it fit but the *auchitya* (propriety) demands that in trying to be the West-friendly, or consumer/reader-friendly they should not disfigure this 'community' while imagining it, as Mistry does in *A Fine Balance*. Attitudinally there are two Mistries "The Mistry of *Such a Long Journey* is different from the Mistry of the last fictional enterprise. The smell of cow-dung and spices, snake charmers, princess and their concubines have been replaced with dirt, squalor, corruption, celluloid heroes and heroines and politicians" their mistresses and distresses. Not absolutely wrong, for much of it forms our Indian reality. But this is not *the* Indian reality. There is something more than this. For the West he, like so many of he counterparts, very well fills the void left by the demise of the Orientalists. He emerges as a 'new-orientalist' who overrides the Orient. The slice of Indian life and reality that Mistry and his ilk depict may mislead even the Indians there, say nothing of the non-Indians particularly the English speaking western reader. How would they imagine this imagined community? The chances of fine community? The chances of fine imbalances can be ruled out only if the novelists bear in mind that whatever the compulsions and pressures of commodification of literature, the distinctive Indian identity or identities lying underneath should be portrayed with full fidelity to Indian realities and to the Indian ways of perceiving them. Even at the risk of repetition let me state that the engagement of the Indian novel with the Indian realities and society is not a luxury for the history given to them, voices the hopes and aspirations, and fears and anxieties as the society develops, of its hitherto unprivileged sections, and spells out their dreams in their own terms. The plural-layerity of Indian society articulated in different Indian languages should find its reflection in Indian novels and their theory. If India is a 'thali' as against the melting pot of America, Indian novel and also the theory of the novel is a 'thali' resisting hegemony of one particular definition, and presenting different cuisines of varied tastes and colours, unmixing yet complementing each other and belonging to the same plate.[22]

X

Theory is an act of seeing. It involves in it the act of seeing (creative/practice), of being seen (criticism), seeing the act of being seen (meta-criticism) and the way one would like to be seen (ideal). Baldly speaking for the sake of a sort of conclusion, a theory of the Indian novel, incorporating all these points in it, will have to keep the following points in view: There can be no single theory of novel, more so in the case of Indian novel. The pluralistic character of the Indian society, its cultural and linguistic realities and existence of Indian novel in different languages of Indian origin and English resists (being viewed in the light of one particular theory) construction of the theory of the Indian novel. The craze for pluralistic considerations, however true they may be, should not make us oversight the commonalities that Indian geophysical, cultural and social location affords us as against the 'colored' eurocentric view of India denying its existence.[23] If India is a 'thali', a theory of Indian novels emanating from Indian fictional creativity in all Indian languages, has to be a 'thali'. But the point of foremost significance is that no theory or theories of the Indian novel should either be prescriptive or exclusive.

Thematically speaking a theory of Indian novels has to consider the novel'(s)'/novelist'(s') engagement with the local/ native Indian reality with the problems and tensions arising out of its confrontation and assimilation with/of global realities The consciousness of the tension between 'local and global', the consequent situations emerging as 'local' and 'global' out of the processes of assimilation and its articulation have to be a criterion of judging the Indian novel. Of the two terms, in our situation, 'local' should be preferred to 'global', as it prioritizes the 'local' over 'global'.[24] It is equally applicable to the creative tension between the India of the 'mind' and the India of existing realities ('physical'), between Indian and non-Indian categories of thoughts, between native (local) and alien (global) narrative techniques and linguistic media which also keep changing under the influence of neighbouring (native Indian languages and Indian English) and global (English in particular) languages.

The Indian novel exists in different Indian languages at multiple levels simultaneously as fictional works among/in relation to its counterparts in the concerned language, among/in relation to its counterparts in languages of Indian origin, in Indian English and in other languages of the world particularly English. Since a novel is best measured in terms of other novels, so the Indian novel offers itself for its consideration in relation to its counterparts. Whatever may be a/the theory of Indian novel, it has to take cognizance of the fact that the Indian novel cannot be measured in isolation.

To conclude let me intone what H. Hatterr tells Nath Banerrji, an anglophile, in response to his own unanswered question:

> What the hell do you know of *Life*?... you only read that damme *writer* Shakespeare, The Bard this, the Bard that! I had rather be a dog bay at the moon! ... But I tell you, man, I have seen more *Life* than that feller Shakespeare! Things happen to me with accents on 'em! If I were to tell all, right from *au commencement* to the *la termination* of my life story, I should like to see some honest critic, pronounce me an inferior to Shakespeare ! This is the Twentieth Century! Body man! Doctor the body, and everything'll be okey-doke.[25]

To me Hatterr stands for an Indian English novelist. And if that is the case, these words quoted by me recoil on me in particular. Nevertheless, the sage scholars will be in a better position to link these scattered ideas and see the glimpse of the full moon on the second day of the lunar cycle.

NOTES

1. Philip Stevick, ed. *The Theory of Novel.* New York. Free Press, 1967, p.2.
2. Perhaps no one understood better than Gandhiji the dangers of the English medium education. He wrote. 'The English medium created an impassable barrier between me and the members of my family, who had not gone through English schools, my father knew nothing of what I was doing. I could not even if I had wished it, interest my father in what I was learning ...I was fast becoming a stranger in my home. I certainly became à superior person. Even my dress began to undergo imperceptible changes.' *Harijan*, 9.3.1938.
3. During the course of a conversation Ganesh Devy suggested that among other reasons that can be forwarded to tackle the question 'Why the first rate fictional works were not available to colonial India?' one was the non-availability of good quality paper in India which did not attract either the first rate novelists or publishers.
4. Namvar Singh, 'The Novel of English Type and Indian Novel', *Critical Practice*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1994, pp. 89-95.
5. Ibid, p.94.
6. Idem.
7. Eugene O' Neill, *Long Day's Journey Into Night.* Delhi: B.I. Publications, 1981, p. 148.
8. Suresh Joshi, *Kathopakathan.* Bombay, 1956.
9. G.M. Tripathi, *Saraswatichandra* Part I. Mumbai: N.M. Tripathi, 1988, p.11.
10. Bhalchand Nemade, 'Marathi Novel' (1950-75), *Setu*, Vol. No. I, 1986, p. 29.
11. M. Madhusudan Dutt, 'Kidderpore,' *The Collected Works of Michael Mashusudan Dutt.* Ed. Kshetra Gupta. Calcutta: Sahitya Sansad, 1841, p. 67.
12. Andrew Roberto defines the novel as 'an Extended fictional narrative in written form' Regarding (Western/English) novel he says that it is 'a genre of written prose fictional narrative which emerged in the early eighteenth century and is characterized by a strong interest in plot, by a degree of psychological, and/or social realism, and frequently by the presence of elements of moral political or social comment'. A.M. Roberto, *The Novel: From its Origins to the Present Day.* London: Bloomsbury, 1996, p.1.

Since India has been one of the early homes of fictional narrative, it is but natural that the Indian novel should be examined on the basis of the narrative traditions, and the Indian concept of novel should be constructed on the basis of the Indian narrative traditions. Kapil Kapoor in theory of the novel, considering it as a category of narrative, examined India's rich narrative traditions of *vangmaya* and *kavya*, classified them and enlisted their sub-divisions as found in the Indian narrative traditions. Kapoor's ontological study of the Indian novel can be a good model to examine novels in Indian languages–not to measure Indianness or unIndianness in the novels concerned on the basis of narrative patterns only but to see to what extent and how these narratives are products of the tension between native Indian narrative traditions and their Western counterparts as they were received by various novelists in different Indian languages. Kapil Kapoor, 'The Theory of The Novel' *Critical Practice*, Vol. II. Jan. 1995, pp. 73-88.

13. Nemade, 'Marathi Novel (19050-5)', p. 29.
14. Vikram Seth, *A Suitable Boy*. Delhi: Penguin, 1993, p. 718.
15. Ibid., 394.
16. Premchand, *Vividh Prasang: Allahabad, 1956*.
17. Raja Rao, 'Foreword' *Kanthapura*. Delhi: Penguin India, 19.
18. C.f. Avadhesh Kumar Singh, 'What a Fall Dear Mr. Rushdie? *The Literary Criterion*, 1999', pp. 23-28.
19. Nirmal Verma, 'Sanskrit, Samay aur Bharatiya Upanyasa', *Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas*. ed. Narendra. Mayur Paperbacks, 1993, p. 773.
20. R.P. Jhabavala cited in M.E. Derrett, *The Modern Indian Novel in English*, Brussels, 1966, p.94.
21. Farrukh Dhondy in his article 'Across the Black Waters: Of Belonging and of Escape' (*Gentleman*, 19th Anniversary issue, March 1999, p.35) parodies the popular song from the film "Shree 420" to define the Indian manner, nay Hindustani *Chaal*, ensconced in different – not" necessarily Indian-external colours, capable of confusing those who get trapped in them.

    'Mere passport bai Brittani
    Meri Company Ltd. Americani
    Kitabein likhata hoon Angrezi
    Phir bhi chaal hai Hindustani.'

    (my passport is British, and I work in an American company Ltd. I write books in English, yet my gait is Indian.)
22. Shashi Tharoor speaks of the Indian reality in terms of the metaphor of "thali", "If America is a melting-pot, then to me India is a "thali", a

selection of sumptuous dishes in different bowls. Each tastes different, and does not necessarily mix with the next, but they belong together on the plate, and they complement each other in making the meal a satisfying repast. "Tharoor in Gentleman, March 1999, p.72.

On the other hand I Allen Sealy, an Indian English novelist, speaks of rootedness in native soil, Indian in our cases which will help us in domesticating a foreign form like the novel. He observes in this regard, "As for form, I have a theory that books need to be rooted in some sort of national soil, their so-called tradition. That one way of domesticating a foreign form (the novel as we know it) is to plant it in a local pot. The pot could be modern or centuries old, but in some peculiar way it shapes as well as nourishes the exotic species. What might seem a limiting procedure is also an enabling one. Languages with an older local tradition may not need this hot-house approach, but English is a special case, at least at its present stage of evolution in this century. *Gentleman* 19th Anniversary Issue, March 1999, p. 114. Viewed in relation to Professor Nemade's rejection of the hot-house approach for the Indian novel it can be added here that Nemade's approach is radical, ideal and applicable to the novel in languages of Indian origin, sparing no respectable space for the Indian English novel. The approach of (high) modernists like Suresh Joshi with no space for nativists considerations is self-defeating and suicidal intellectually. Sealy's approach is pragmatic and applicable to the Indian English novel.

23. Ironically some of these 'India-sceptics' like Salman Rushdie come from India. In an article in "the *Guardian*" (March 27, 1987) Rushdie had interrogated the very existence of India with the questions: "Does India exist? Did it ever exist?" Cited in Karan Thapar, "Rushdie's Inverted Quest", *The Times of India*, April 2, 1987.
24. The portmanteau words 'lobal' and 'global', made of 'local' and 'global', were used generously but quite meaningfully during he IACLALS seminar on "The Local and the Global" held on 14th & 15th November, 1997. I take them from there.
25. G.V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr.* London: Aldor, 1948.

Reinventing Comparative Literature

INDRA NATH CHOUDHURI

My reference point is the latest book of Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline.*[1] The main focus of this book is how to create a new Comparative Literature (CL) in response to the rising tide of multiculturalism and cultural studies and to spell out the intellectual mission of the discipline.

I have, in this short paper, taken up all those issues, which worry her such as historicity, area studies, multiculturalism and cultural studies in the background of globalization.

I am a little worried about a statement, which she makes in the book. Being an activist scholar she is very forthright in her criticism, as we have seen in the book with reference to area studies, cultural studies and even multiculturalism, when she takes a stand she does not vacillate and stick to it.

She has shown her hostility towards area studies, multiculturalism because they are used as political handles by the developed countries but then she makes a conciliatory statement in the book and I quote, "I am advocating a depoliticization of the politics of hostility toward a politics of friendship to come, and thinking of the role of CL in such a responsible effort."[2]

Why this conciliatory move? Is it because with age she has mellowed down or is it because CIA is threatening by making dossiers of all those teachers of American Universities, who criticize the American policy and Bush for his unholy war in Iraq.

I do not know, may be one day we will know. In the meantime let the ghost dance.

We all thought like Gayatri Spivak in the beginning of our career that CL should be 'world embracing'. In 1906 Tagore used the term *Viswa Sahitya* for CL Goethe initiated the idea when he coined a term *Waltlitaratur* for the study of literatures of different countries together.

That was an era when the mental horizon of Europe had been considerably enlarged with the discovery of disparate areas of culture and literature, particularly of the Middle Eastern countries and of Asia, which included India, China and Japan.

We were also convinced that CL should include the open-ended possibility of studying all literatures, with linguistic rigour and historical savvy. More than that the effort was to find out a universal oneness in the study of literatures of the world. In the Indian situation it became easy because in the Indian way of thinking the essence of the individual or the particular is no more than universal by virtue of which the individual or the particular is grounded and realized.

Comparative study of literatures was primarily a study of similarities. So was influence study - influence as inundation covering everything or as whetstone which sharpens the influenced text or affinity study and even using polygenetic method to find similarities between two or more incongruent texts or characters like Hori of *Godan* by Premchand, Indranath of *Srikanta* by Saratchandra Chatterje, Sashi of *Putul Nacher Itikatha* by Manik Bandopadhyay or Doctor Rieux of *Plague* by Camus. All these studies of similarity ultimately aimed at creating a universal structure of oneness.

Initially CL was accepted as a universal category but at the same time many opposed this notion of a universal constuct. Their observation was that if one wanted to do CL i.e. study of more than one literature one was immediately pulled back to history, however formalistic study of literary works might keep comparatists away from history.

Broadly speaking, there are two main approaches to literary history which are:

1. The traditional and simplistic literary histories which posit a clear and unambiguous relationship between the literary text and the historical background and
2. The deconstructionist approach, which denies the validity of a relationship.

The work of the Marxism-oriented theorists like Fredric Jameson, of feminist scholars and New Historicists are important in this regard in that they avoid both extremes, perceiving accurately the weaknesses inherent in them-namely excessive simplification.

Jameson's slogan is "always historicize." He is interested in the relations that subsist among texts, their represented worlds and the internally represented worlds of readers. He sees interpretation as an effort to uncover formal qualities as well as the ideological structure of a given text. This, of course, involves the interpreter's ability to forge inter-connections between a given text and the various other narratives through which we come to know history and society.

What is interesting to observe about Jameson's conceptualization is that he does not totally ignore or brush aside questions of textuality. He proposed the following formulation that history is not text..........but it is inaccessible to us except in textual form. Literary explication should involve an act of deconstruction; but the deconstruction should move beyond the analysis of figurality in verbal discourse to an acceptance of the fact that texts are in Edward Said's term "Worldly" and inextricably linked to the living actualities of society, history and politics.

In fact, the whole issue of universality sans history reflects a political bias and smacks of racism. Chinua Achebe, in his essay on 'colonialist criticism,' says that in the nature of things, the work of a western writer is automatically informed by universality. It is only others who must strain to achieve it. Jameson's opinion, which is no doubt inadequate and slanted, describes the Third World literary works, as national allegories, which have nothing to do with universal cosmopolitanism. And so Chinua Achebe says that he should like to see the world "universal" banned altogether from the discussions on African or to add, Indian Literature until such time as the people cease to use it as a synonym for the narrow, self-serving parochialism of Europe, until their horizon extends to include the entire world.

In the process of including the entire world, Area Studies were made a part of the Comparative Literature of the West, which were primarily related to foreign areas. Spivak is right to say that Area Studies were established to secure US Power in the cold war. Even today, they are tied to the politics of power and their connections to the power elite in the countries studied are still strong. The 'other' of the Area Studies in the West is an in alienable entity external to one self is both a source of terror and an object of desire. Sartre's famous statement, 'Hell is the other' caries a strong echo of Hegel, who always defines one's identity as identity against the other either to be appropriated or to be destroyed. But the Western mind knows well that if he succeeds in completely subjugating the 'other' the identity of his own self becomes dubious. He wants to become whole by destroying the other but without the other, he becomes nothing. The most difficult thing in CL is to resist mere appropriation of the other by the dominant. Nonetheless CL must always cross borders as says Spivak and crossing borders, as Derrida never ceases reminding us via kant, is a problematic affair.[3] Whatever be the problem Spivak is sure that in CL studies (Her reference point is American Universities) the languages of the Southern Hemisphere should be accepted as active cultural media rather than as objects of cultural study by the sanctioned ignorance of the metropolitan migrant.[4]

In CL as Spivak mentions 'liberal multiculturalism' is on the agenda of CL for sometime and cultural studies are also on the rise. Cultural studies are also, as a matter of fact, "the politics of identity". It is also a diversification of CL achieved by including mass culture, tabloid press or soap operas or study of football crowds, of house - music parties or discourse analysis or study of the relation between public meanings and private experience. In fact, cultural studies are related to Diaspora literatures and the socio-cultural issues of the Asian immigration and the study of the margins in India, The logical consequences of our loosely defined discipline (CL), says Spivak were, surely, to include the open-ended possibility of studying all literatures but it earned itself a reputation (not a happy one) for lacking in rigour as well as for politicizing the academic world of CL.[5] It is essential that CL should include the Diaspora writings with the same enthusiasm and exactitude as is done in other cases. Diaspora literature is related to two homes and two cultures simultaneously - the culture of origin and the culture of adoption. In Diaspora writings one can see a cultural encounter, the bicultural pulls and the emergence of a new culture, which was a liberated experience for them; however, Edward Said calls it a show of schizophrenia and Homi Bhabha hibridity. Whatever may be the thing one can agree with Spivak that the range and diversity of the Diaspora (she particularly mentions Islamic) is immense. It is altogether appropriate that under the cultural studies CL should undo the politically monolithized view of Islam that rules the globe today, without compromising the strong unifying ideology potentially alive in that particular cultural formation.[6]

The very fact that in many parts of the world the discipline of CL is now defined as cultural studies indicates the broadening of its scope. The days of cultural complacency are over. No more can we be content with a self-ascertained sense of cultural superiority. The inclusiveness and expanded scope of Comparative Literature liberate us from cultural prison and helps us to develop a bigger perspective where more than judgment understanding through dialogue has become the axiom of comparative literary studies.

One can say the same thing about multiculturalism. Spivak says that 'liberal multiculturalism' has been on the agenda of CL for sometime. Mark the word 'liberal' because multiculturalism otherwise in the post-industrial society in America, Canada, Europe and England is used as a political weapon, a method of ruling a country of people of different cultures and ethnicity and is used with a purpose.

The issue of multiculturalism is related to the notion of global village.

But as world citizen of this village, we realised that this is a creation of Western Civilization, a point in the relentless process of westernization of the globe; the terms and conditions for living and participating in the life of this village are laid down by the West.

We, who live in India in homes and forests, sometimes even on the pavements of the roads of metropolitan cities are being asked and goaded to want to be living in this village as world citizen primarily for two reasons:

1. We matter as a potential market. Infact, WTO, GATT, International Monetary Fund are all tools to conscript us as world citizen for the benefit ofWest and its market.
2. We are now asked to be partners in the war with terror started by USA after 9/11 but the war has now turned into an unholy war.

Hence acceptance of multiculturalism has become a strategic necessity. It is also a strategy for the functioning of democracy, which is based on a single vote system.

The principle is, we rule and they the lesser breeds may get on with their little lives and breeding.

Master wouldn't dream of intervening unless something is done that might undermine his place at the top, in which case all this cultural relativism goes quickly through the window. If master wanted he would talk highly about Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh and a few others but would be careful not to give them a space in their histories of literature and if at all given, not in the main body but in a side chapter. Sahitya Akademi includes the English writings of the diaspora in its history of Indian English literature. However, the issue of other Diaspora writers, writing in Indian languages, has a different story to tell. Except a few of the Indian language writers like Alokranjan Dasgupta (Bengali), Usha Priyamvada (Hindi), Sati Kumar, Dev & Rode (Punjabi), others have no place in Indian literary historiography. Most of the Diaspora writers are dedicated to their writings but occupy a second space of exile & cultural solitude. They, in India itself are kept in the margin. Sahitya Akademi blacks out these writers from the histories of literature in different Indian languages brought out by them. These writers establish their Identity in the home away from home & generate their Diaspora literary consciousness by a complex network of historical consciousness and can be an important segment in the reinvention of comparative literature. The writings in translation of our best writers of *bhasas* like Takazhi Shiv Shankar Pillai, Prem Chand, Tara Sankar Bandopadhyay, Manik Bandopadhyay or Ananthamurty would not be read as literature per se but as pieces of sociological or anthropological study of the Indian society.

Hence, when Spivak speaks of liberal multiculturalism she is, infact, not talking about it as a political doctrine with a programmatic content or a philosophical school with a distinct theory of man's place in the world but as a perspective on or a way of viewing human life. After all she knows it well the demand for multiculturalism is a rebellion against the intellectual arrogance of the Western man. Multiculturalism is a stage of historical awakening in the West is recent. The Multiculturalism in India is ancient; whose multicultural concerns have long informed India's history and traditions, constitutions & political arrangements and have always found unity in its diversity. Multiculturalism, which gives people hyphenated identities is a common recourse to Western English speaking countries. The 'identity that India nurtured was not 'hyphenated' but integral to our history of civilization survival.[7]

Hence, liberal multiculturalism is to undo the metropolitan multiculturalists' efforts to turn the world's others into identitarians or nationalist as says Jameson or class as explained by Aizaz Ahmad. In the present day, CL should attempt to include three central insights of multiculturalism in its intellectual mission of the discipline:

i) The cultural embedded ness of human beings,
ii) The inescapability and desirability of cultural plurality and
iii) Plural & multicultural constitution of each culture.

Multiculturalism, as said earlier is a rebellion against the intellectual arrogance of the Western man & so must the new CL persistently and repeatedly undermine and undo the definitive tendency of the dominant to appropriate the emergent (P.100) Asians, Africans, Hispanic under the multicultural disposition.

In a multicultural situation the demand for separate identity is symptomatic of the desire for self-realization rather than an ultimate objective itself. Each group is just saying, give us our space, in which we can feel we belong, give us our culture, our religions with which we can live with others and with honour. Recent banning of head scarf of the Muslim women or turban of Sikh community in France indicates a tendency to uphold and support only what is valued and what is practised in their culture and entertain a biased approach towards what is valued in other areas. Briton's Chancellor of Exchequer and PM-in-waiting Gordon Brown, supporting his colleague Jack Straw admonished Muslim women for wearing the *hijab*, as it impedes communication between people and set them apart from the rest of Britons. He asked British Moslem women to familiarize themselves with the Magna Carta – in other words – take on English thought, English dress and manners – was the message.

The idea of 'good life' is no more confined to one's family, society or country but is related to people who are not seen as tools of exploitation but as persons who are equally informed, responsible and creative. In fact, multiculturalism is used as a counter globalizing means to neutralize homogenization, appropriation or cooption which the global players want to achieve for making maximum profit or what countries like America wants to create – a politically and culturally homogenous melting pot entity. Under any kind of division, between centre and margin, between them and us, it is difficult for the world to survive but at the same time, particularly, in the emerging conditions of global markets and the communications, desires for a unicultural polity can be harmful to minority rights and cultural differences. It creates hierarchical multiculturalism instead of equaliarian and liberal authoritarian polity. It is not integration or assimilation of the minority with the majority social group but the feeling of community, which needs to be revived to gap between the centre and the margin.

In spite of the fact that social anthropologists like Furnivall, Jenkins, and Vincent[8] accepted the notion of pluralism, and respect the celebration of cultural differences, there is a strong group, which shows its apprehension that it will promote ethno nationalism and may disintegrate the existing world order. The vocal protagonist of this idea is Huntington and his theory of clash of civilizations[9] and Fukuyama's assertion that American Liberal democracy may constitute the endpoint of mankind's ideological evoluation and the final form of human govt. and as such constitutes the end of history.[10] In this frame of thought the celebration of differences either in the political domain or in the cultural or economic domain smacks of clash of civilizations. As a reaction people create enclosures to prevent their annihilation.

They want economic prosperity and at the same time do not think that in the bargain they have to forgo their cultural individuality and their ethnic identity. Unless cross-cultural exchanges become reciprocal and language of liberalism multilingual, Comparative Literature will continue to struggle to define its own domain. The tragedy is that modernism has imposed a single perspective in dealing with human culture and today this kind of fixed perspective is challenged by the indeterminacy of experience. The search for one truth in the many is at odds with the relativist experience of Anthropology. The point is to dignify subjective experience, not to deny reality; to appreciate imagination, not to disregard reason; to honour our differences, not to underestimate our common humanity.[11]

The last point is that instead of elaborating Spivak's proposition to create a new CL to lead us out of a 'restricted disciplinary circuit' (however she says there is nothing new about the new CL) and call it an 'open-plan fieldwork', a new vision of 'comparativity' in Indian context can be created to help us in reinventing CL in Indian context which was, in fact, initiated by Sisir Kumar Das in 1991 by publishing his *History of Indian Literature* in two volumes.[12] However, I will in no way undermine the insights given by Spivak by presenting her ideas of the intellectual mission of the discipline. On one side, she wants to expand the scope of CL by supplementing gender training and human rights intervention. She wants CL and Area Studies to work together in the fostering not only of national literatures of the global south but also of the writing of countless indigenous languages in the world that were programmed to vanish when the maps were made. On the other side, she believes that reading texts like Mahasweta Devi's novella *Pterodactyl* with attention to language and idiom, CL can supplement the apparitions of Cultural and Ethnic Studies as well as the arrogance of Area Studies where it retains the imprints of the cold war (P.70). CL laced with Area Studies goes towards the other, particularly African, Asian, and Hispanic. She emphatically says that we stand rather as reader with imagination ready for the effort of othering, however imperfectly, as an end itself.

Sisir Das reinvention of CL in Indian context actually meant to redraw the contours of Indian Literature as a category including in it oral, folk, tribal and dalit and women on either side of the tradition-modernity line to give it a new totality. After all in Indian literary context both *Sastra* and *Loka* or *Margi* and *Desi* are always taken together to understand the entirety of India's aesthetic tradition but of course not as a monolithic unity but as diverse structures complementing each other. The complementariness of *Loka* and *Sastra* is very deep and intricate. In the folk story of the marriage of Siva and Parvati, the words of praise for Siva are *Sastra* oriented but the words of praise for Parvati, who is the mother of the universe, are folk in content. In *Sastra* the loom of a weaver and the wheel of the potter are used to explain many intricate theories, but unfortunately being steeped into Western literary theories, as we were, we never gave any place to oral/folk literature in the histories of literature in different Indian languages.

K.M. George in his two volume *History of Comparative Indian Literature* added a lengthy chapter on Indian folk literature but it was just an addition not an acceptance of folk in the totality of Indian Literature. Oral/folk literature could not be resurrected from its marginality. It was Sisir Kumar Das who for the first time in his two volume history of Indian literature recognized oral/folk literature as a strong voice of the literary tradition of India. While describing the literary scene after British crushed down the 1857 war of Independence Prof. Das reveals that there was a complete silence in the Indian Literary world about the war of Independence and if there was any voice to be heard that was only of praise for the British as described in the *Kasidas* of Mirza Ghalib or in the Gujrati poems of Narmad or Bengali by Ishwar Chanda gupta. But at the same time some kind of an ambivalence was very much perceptible in their writings and hence Narmad writes also about *desh*, Ishwar Chandra Gupta writes satirically about British raj and Ghalib bemoans the tragedy of the situation prevailing during that time.

However, the bards of oral poetry gave vent to their feeling of anger and frustration against the British during that period of silence and subjection. This oral voice became a constant refrain later for the Indian poets to write poetry of revolt and freedom which became a major thrust in the making of Indian liteature. Orality or folk is never marginalized in India, it is always accepted as an alternative tradition and alternative is never understood as 'the opposite'. Here in India the glory of 'mainstream' literature rests not by marginalizing but by accepting oral or folk as complementary as two poles of the same continuum. Indian Tradition thinks that folk or tribal literature is the creation of the conscious mind of the prehistorical man and there is hardly any difference between the conscious mind of the prehistoric and the modern man. In Indian context oral, tribal or folklore are not the residue of the past, nor the behaviour of the uncivilized but it is the continuity of a rich culture and also a process of making the present more life worthy.

At the same time one should make an effort to recreate comparative criticism particularly because in the modern times we moved from Sanskrit poetics to Western theory by ignoring the *bhahsa* traditions of literary criticism in Tamil, Marathi, Kannada, Hindi and also in other *bhashas* – Every *bhasha* has a continuous history of literary expession guided by it own inner dynamics and hence Sanskrit heritage and *bhasha* heriage need to be seen in terms of a historic continuity. The complementariness of *Loka* and *Sastra* or the reinvention of comparative Literature will continue as bases to understand the range and the entirety of India's asthetic tradition and negotiate the whole issue of marginality. Moreover the formalistic theory of literature of Sanskrit poetics or the modern theories of Western poetics are totally insufficient to analyse and explain the *dalit* (protest) and *gramin* (rural) literary heterodoxy.

In economic terminology *gramin* and *dalit* have an economic principle of identification through separation from the centre. Besides there are many other approaches to negotiate this whole issue of margin, developed, developing and under developed countries, south and north divide or as it happened in the beginning of the Comparative Literature when western scholars made major European Literatures as the area of study knowing well that there existed many great literatures outside the Western world. This kind of euro-centric attitude and colonial bias marginalized Asian and African literatures as well as the literature of the margins. Today if there is a buzzword in cultural critique, says Gyatri Chakravarty Spivak,'it is marginality.'

Dalit literature articulates the pain, indignation and fury of a most creative and imaginative segment of Indians marginalized and oppressed since the time of the Smritis. In fact, it constitutes an avante garde attempt at forging an alternative nationhood of a caste-free society. This literature raises questions, interrogates and registers protest and also subverts. Otherwise, it knows well that it will be consumed and completely marginalized.

Dalits now challenge the tone and content of the existing literary canon created by the *sastra* protagonists and decentralize the whole process of literary movement. It creates an alternative aesthetics and extends the linguistic and generic possibilities of literature. *Dalit* poetry rejects the norms set by *Sastra* poetics and throws overboard classical values like propriety, balance, restraint and under-statement. The diction of these poets is deliberately subversive as it challenges the middle class notions of linguistic decency, redraws the map of literature by discovering and exploring a whole new continent of experience that has so far been left to darkness and silence. However, with the recognition of the *Dalit* literature by the establishment it has now become more mature, sober, larger in its concern, more conscious of form, less angry and complaining. The recent phase of *dalit* literature has broadened the scope of its concerns and transcended the ideology of destructive hatred. It is now more concerned in creating its own path and seeking its own direction rather than spending their energy in proving the incompleteness and incompetence of traditional, established aesthetics. *Dalit* critics like Sharan Kumar Limbale want to establish a poetics of the margin in its own rights independently of *savarna* initiatives. They want to reject the centre and in the process want to affirm the importance of a moral radical deconstructive path. Hence the literary theory in modern India needs major innovations to give it efficacy and that will be the real reinvention of Comparative Literature.

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CULTURE

The Indo-Islamic Cultural Fusion And The Institution of the Qawwali

GOPI CHAND NARANG

Introduction

The term *qawwali* is derived from *qul,* the imperative of the Arabic verb *qaula* 'to say', 'to speak', In the Holy Quran suras 109, 112 and 114 begin with the word *qul* 'say!', and this is evidence of the sanctity with which it is regarded. Reading anyone or all of these verses is also part of the *fatiha;* therefore pronouncing the word *qul* is the equivalent of a blessing or the conclusion of a prayer. In Arabic *qawwal* does not mean 'a singer', but rather 'one who speaks volubly' or 'a story teller'. When it was adopted by Urdu its semantic boundaries shifted and the term *qawwal* was exclusively applied to a person who sang *qawwalis.* The word *qawwal* was possibly first used in Turkish in connection with the 'whirling and chanting dervishes' of Jalaluddin Rumi, but when it reached India it gradually became a standard element in the sufistic ritual of the seminaries *(khanqahs).* In its present form the *qawwali* is first and foremost an exquisite manifestation of the music and culture born from the interaction of Hinduism and Islam. As a musical form it belongs exclusively to the Indian subcontinent, which began to develop after the advent of Islam during the middle ages. It was patronized and cherished by most Muslim sufis, especially those belonging to the Chishti order.

It is also true that in the popularization of the qawwali the *ghazal* played a central role. In qawaali usually it is the *ghazal* that is sung. (The genre of *ghazal* borrowed from Persian, is the most popular form of Urdu poetry where like *doha* each couplet is an independent unit of meaning; but unlike *doha* the *ghazal* is a string of couplets ranging from 5 to 9 or more, which are held together by the metre and the rhyme scheme, i.e., aa, ba, ca, et al.) The Urdu *ghazal* occasionally embedded with the Persian couplets or the *dohas* of Braj Bhasha, gradually made the qawwali a part of the sufi music of the subcontinent. No doubt melodies subconsciously present in the collective memory of the people of the subcontinent were amalgamated with the singing of qawwali. For this reason and because of its spiritual appeal, it became acceptable to and appreciated by the common people. In the twentieth century, with the rising graph of the Urdu *ghazal*, and with the help of the theatre, the film and other forms of electronic mass media, (as we will discuss later) the qawwali has to some extent been divorced from its religious roots and has established itself as a part of the subcontinental secular music. It is extremely important to bear in mind that in its present form it has no connections whatsoever with the Arab world or any other Islamic country (other than Pakistan or its neighbouring countries). In its origin and development the qawwali is first and foremost a creation of the subcontinent. In order to appreciate its profound relationship with the subcontinental collective subconscious mind and psyche, it is necessary to take into account aspects of the composite nature of Indo-Islamic society, of the shared culture of the subcontinent and of all that the Indian Muslims and non-Muslims have in common. It is also important to note the obvious similarity between the qawwali and the Indian ritualistic temple singing, known as *bhajan-kirtan*.

With the coming of the Muslims to India gradually a composite culture came into existence, manifestations of which can be found in both the sufi and the bhakti movements. Along with this, the fusion of the Muslim and Indian concepts, which could not be completely achieved at the religious level, manifested itself fully in music and the fine arts. We should always remember that the aesthetic compared to the religious consciousness is more liable to be influenced by time and space. Therefore a kind of harmony came about in the shared aesthetic taste. In Indian music the *khayal* is considered to be an invention of the Muslims. Not only did it become popular among the Hindus, but without its existence it is impossible even to conceive of Indian music. In the same way the Muslims eagerly adopted the *dhrupad*, which is an ancient form of indigenous singing. The invention of the *sitar* and the *tabla* is attributed to Amir Khusrao (d.1325); the Muslim *sarangi* and the *sarod* also became notable instruments in Indian orchestration.

The Indian sufi saints always had a great affection for indigenous music. During the time of Akbar, in music, as in other cultural spheres, shared tastes were deeply felt, and foreign and native forms merged with each other and forever became one. The famous performer Tansen was one of Akbar's select group, known as the *Nauratna* 'Nine Jewels'. In imitation of the Mughal rulers, notably the Sultans of Bijapur and Jaunpur and the Nawabs of Avadh also lent their patronage to Indian music and in this way attempted to forge a harmony between the emotions and feelings of different sections of Indian people.

The concept of love (*'ishq)* and *sama'*

From ancient times India has been the cradle of ascetics, yogis and religious devotees. Through the influence of the *Puranas* religious devotion *(bhakti)* and the emotions of love *(prem)* have in one form or another always been present. In Islamic sufism the concept of *'ishq* (deep, frenzied love) acquired a central position. Love is regarded as a universal force, which is embedded in every atom of creation, and in its fire the dross of worldly existence bums and remains captive. In the words of the poet Mir (1722-1810):

> *Mauj zani hai Mir faluk tuk her lamha hai toofaan zaa*
> *Ser taa ser hai talaatum jiskaa who aazam dariya hai ishq*
>
> *Waves crash around and storms rage, Mir,*
> *From the whirlpool to the sky above.*
> *The buffeting winds tear all apart;*
> *And this is the fearsome River of Love.*

This concept of love was reinforced when it fused with the similar bhakti concept of *prem*. In Indian devotional practice music *bhajan-*

kirtan had been customary since ancient times; the use of musical instruments such as the *mridang*, the *jhanjh*, the *majera*, the *iktara* and the *dholak* was also widespread in the temples and the shivalas. The Muslims thus began to acquire a fondness for Indian music and this interest grew to such an extent that among them many great masters and performers arose. In spite of the fact that music is forbidden in Islamic worship, in general Muslim rulers granted it their patronage and, as we have already pointed out, the courts of the sultans, nawabs and Muslim nobles became centers for the fostering of Indian music. In the medieval period music played no less a role in the cultural and social life of the Muslims than it did in that of the Hindus. One effect that this sensitive and emotional aspect of the Indian temperament had on sufism can be witnessed in the amazing popularity of *sama'* and the qawwali. *Sama'* (lit. listening) technically stands for an assembly where qawwali is sung to induce *haal* 'spiritual trance'. On the question of *sama'* as a sufi practice there was always profound disagreement between the orthodox '*ulema* and the sufis, and many treatises were written in favour of and against the practice. Some were of the opinion that it was legitimate, while others disagreed. There was much discussion of the subject, but the more vehemently the orthodox expressed their disapproval the more popular the qawwali became. In fact most of the sufis of India, and those of the Chishti order in particular, in the words of Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, "came to regard *sama'* and qawwali as their spiritual sustenance" (*Tarikh-i Mashaikh-i Chisht'* The History of the Chishti Order', p. 22)

Urdu poets and music

Some historians ascribe the invention of the *qawwali* to Amir Khusrao, who was the favourite follower (*murid*) of Nizamuddin Auliya. Some scholars give Hasan Savant, who was connected with Khwaja Mo'inuddin Chishti Ajmeri, the status of (*awwaliyat*) the first practitioner. Some of the oldest elements or sections of the qawwali, the *qaul*, *tarana*, *qalbana* and *sahela*, recall compositions attributed to him. For example, *'Man kunto Maula, Fa haza Ali ul Maula'* 'The one whose Lord I am, 'Ali is also his Lord' is frequently sung as a qaul, and *'Chaap tilak sab cheeni re mî se nainaan milaai ke'* 'after falling in love I have lost my all' is sung as sahela. In qawwalis it is customary to include verses from other languages. Qawwalis in praise of the Holy Prophet (*na'at*), which were current in earlier times, can still be heard. The following Persian *ghazal* attributed to Amir Khusrao in this respect is extremely popular till this day :

> *Nami daanum chay manzil bood shab jaey kay mun boodum*
> *Ba her soo raqs-e-bismil bood shah jaey kay mun boodum*
>
> *Pari paikar nigaray sarv qadday lala rukhsaray*
> *Saraapa aafat-e-dil bood shab jaey kay mun boodum*
>
> *Raqeebaan gosh bar awaaz, oo der naaz-o-mun tarsaan*
> *Sukhan guftan chay mushkil bood shah jaey kay mun boodum*
>
> *Khuda khud Mir-e-majlis bood undur laa makaan Khusrao*
> *Muhammad shamm-e-mehfil bood shah jaey kay mun boodum*
>
> *I cannot tell which abode it was, the place where I spent the night;*
> *All around writhing of stricken lovers, the place where I spent the night.*
>
> *That beauty, her form like a cypress tall, her face the tulip red;*
> *Ah! What pain it gave to the heart, the place where I spent the night.*
>
> *My rivals attentive and she so proud, and I stood trembling there;*
> *It was hard to utter a word in the place where I spent the night.*
>
> *God at the head of the gathered crowd; and Khusrao lost in the Infinite;*
> *Muhammad the candle that lit the throng in the place where I spent the night.*

Most of the early Urdu poets were connected either with sufi seminaries or with the courts. In both places Indian music was highly prized. Those who took part in poetic gatherings, where emotions frequently reached a state of ecstasy, were well acquainted with Indian musical instruments and *ragas*. Some of the Urdu poets were themselves adept musicians and acquired special skills in the art.

On the subject of Khwaja Mir Dard, whose *khanqah* flourished in Delhi during the eighteenth century, Muhammad Husain Azad wrote: 'He had a great mastery of music, and many talented musicians brought their pieces to him for advice and correction. He considered *khayal* as an impressive composition, which gladdens the heart and elevates the soul. For this reason most of the sufi orders have included it in their worship. Hence it became customary on the second and twenty-fourth of each month for great artists, singers, experts and people of good taste to meet together [in his seminary] and sing their mystic compositions.' (*Ab-i Hayyat.* p. 182) In the histories of Urdu poetry it is noted that the poets Qalandar Bakhsh Jur'at, Nawab Mahabbat Khan, Inshallah Khan Insha, Bahadur Shah Zafar and Ghalib were all fond of music and would welcome the best practitioners of the art with much enthusiasm.

The finest exponents of the *ghazal* all had a deep affection for indigenous music. Since the time of Amir Khusrao Persian *ghazals* have been sung. But in the age of the Later Mughals, and especially during the reign of Mohammad Shah 'Rangila' the Urdu *ghazal* became part and parcel of Indian music. The sounds of this music can from time to time be heard clearly in the works of the Urdu poets:

> Mir Dard:
> *Khalq mein hain par juda sab khalq say rahtay hain hum*
> *Taal ki gintee say baahar jis tarah roopak mein sum*
>
> *We belong to the world we live in, but we always stand apart,*
> *Like the climax of the roopak*[1] *taal aloof from the beat of the drum.*
>
> Momin:
> *Us ghairat-e-Naaheed ki hur taan hai Deepak*
> *Shola saa lapuk jaey hai aawaaz to dekho*
>
> *Her beauty puts Venus to shame; every tone is the fiery deepak*[2]*;*
> *Behold her wondrous voice, shimmering like a flame.*
>
> Firaq:
> *Yeh teraa jism hai ya raagni hai aa kay kharri*
> *Kay aaj tak to na dekha tha yeh badun ka rachaao*

Is this your body or a ragini that stands before me?
Before today I've never seen such splendour in any form.

Social aspects

It is worth noting that in the medieval times the vogue of the qawwali also presented a challenge to the orthodox constraints of formal religion and social practice. In the Indo-Islamic society of the medieval period the open expression of amorous emotions were not acceptable in the scale of social values. Indeed, this was regarded as forbidden. This kind of activity among members of the nobility was frowned upon and greeted with the harshest opprobrium. For men and women unfortunately there were always double standards. The problem of family honour *'izzat'* and reputation was another matter. Hence, the emotional reaction to such psychological pressure along with other factors might have found its expression in the appeal to love *(frenzied 'ishq)*, ill-repute, rakishness and profligacy, which on the path of the mystic acquired social acceptance in the guise of spirituality. In the amorous poetry of the *ghazal*, madness, disgrace and ill-repute became a matter of pride. Laying stress upon 'wordly love' *('ishq-i majazi)* for 'spiritual love *('ishq-i haqiqi)* and its various states was common in society, and to boast about one's profligacy, to talk openly about one's disgrace was to some extent a reaction against the moral restraints which society imposed. For centuries the *ghazal* and the sufi love poetry has acted as a kind of safety valve. The voice that was first raised against the superficiality of the orthodoxy and the harshness of its moral straight jacket, soon turned into a tension between the religious law and the *Tariqat* (the path of the mystic). In the prevailing climate this tension became even more intense. It is clear that qawwali and *sama'* were associated with the *Tariqat*.

The subcontinental mind and temperament, because of its peculiar sensibility and profound emotion, hardly paid any attention to the fetters of imposed moral behaviour, however harsh they might be. Therefore in sufism, under the influence of the subcontinental psyche, the desire to rebel against formal morality became more apparent. Emotion, rapture, *sama'* and qawwali, notwithstanding the opposition of the *'ulema*, at the popular level became a part of worship. The more the religious hierarchy emphasized that such practices were in contradiction to the religious law, the more the sufis adopted it at the popular level. The sufi *khanqahs* of India were frequently populated by singers and musicians. While the practice of singing qawwalis had no place in the Arab world or in Iran, its roots were firmly planted in the soil of India.

The ecstatic aspect

In sufism the constrained individual spirit *(nafs-i infiradi)* is frequently compared to a droplet of water or a bubble, while the unrestrained universal spirit *(nafs-i kulli)* is likened to an expanse of water or the ocean. The ultimate goal of the droplet is to be united with the sea. In the same way the journey of the human ego is to seek annihilation and to become one with the Infinite Being *(zaat-i mutlaq)*.

> *Ishrat-e-qatra hai darya mein fana ho jaana*
> *'The pleasure of the droplet is to become as nought in the ocean'.*
>
> (Ghalib)

When the Self vanishes, then no feeling of existence remains and absolute unity prevails everywhere. In other words, present fancies, the imaginary world, the known and the unknown, in fact all but God *(haqq)*, are annihilated.

Indian thought and philosophy regard the ultimate state of the Self as a condition in which the difference between the objective and the subjective is completely erased. In Indian poetry and literature, in its art, dance and sculpture, the ultimate goal is total spiritual absorption, aesthetic feeling and rapture, where the ego breaks its shell of individuality and becomes lost in the expanse of the Supreme Ego. This need is fulfilled to its fullest extent by music, and the *Shastras* have pronounced music *(sangeet)* as one of the yogas, whose purpose is to eliminate the duality of the self and non-self in order to produce a sense of supreme beauty (cf. Ananda Coomara Swami, *Dance of Siva*, p. 111-14). According to the Hindu view of creation, it was sound that manifested first. In Vedas it is referred to as *Nada Brahma* or the 'Sound Celestial'.

In India the proof of the success of any artistic experience is that it should raise our emotions to their highest peak so that we become completely oblivious of ourselves. The self-sufficient ego should escape from its prison and become so immersed in selflessness that a feeling of boundlessness *(afaqiyyat or vahdat)* is produced. The Indian yogis have stated that aesthetic consciousness is the name of that most agreeable ecstatic state in which all one's faculties are encompassed by the subconscious, and in which the soul *(atman)* experiences the ultimate joy and exhilaration *(paramananda)*. In the same way Urdu poets see the *ghazal* (mystic, philosophical or amorous) as a journey for the emotions at the end of which the superficial distinctions of our feelings are erased, and our sight passes beyond the limits of worldly constraints. This is the place where the distinction between multiplicity and oneness no longer exists, in other words where the droplet becomes one with the ocean, and can proclaim 'I am the sea!' It is a place where the particle of sand falls into the embrace of the wide expanse of the desert. But the basic experience of this spiritual event is beyond understanding and analysis. Just as a congenitally blind person can never appreciate the beauty of a rainbow or the majesty of a sunset, no one can explain or analyse a truly ecstatic phenomenon. No matter in how many ways the intellectuals have tried to describe the Supreme Being, the *Upanishads* have contradicted all other theories with the words *neti, neti* 'not so! 'not so!' Concerning this stage of supreme knowledge the sufi would say:

> *Aan raa kay khabar shud khabarash baaz nayayad*
> *'He who has attained this secret, his secret will never be revealed.'*

The yogis describe this state as *ananda* 'ecstatic joy', In the rapture expressed in the *qawwali* only unity *(vahdat)* reigns as described in this masterpiece ghazal of 18th century Deccani poet Siraj Aurangabadi:

> *Khabar-e-tahaiyurr-e-ishq sun na junoon raha na paree rahi*
> *Na to tu raha na to main rahajo rahi so bekhabari rahi*
>
> *Chali simt-e-ghaib sey ek hava kay chaman zuhoor ka jal giya*
> *Magar ek shakh-i-nihal-e-gham jisay dil kahen so haree rahi*

Who ajab ghari thee kayjis ghari liya dars nuskha-e-ishq ka
Ke kitab aql ki taaq menjo dhari thee tyon hi dhari rahee

When I heard the news of the wonder of love,
Neither frenzy was left nor the sweetheart remained.
I was no more, and you were no more;
Oblivion only oblivion remained.

What came from beyond the Invisible World?
It consumed the Visible Garden with fire,
And only one branch of the Tree of Grief,
Which they call the heart, in flower remained.

How strange was the hour when I entered that room
And studied the manuscript of Love!
The book of Wisdom was left on the shelf
And there unopened it has long remained.

Mir Taqi Mir :
Gali mem uski gaya so gaya na bolaa phir
Mem Mir Mir kar usko bahot pukaar raha

I went to see her in her street; I went and spoke no more...
Again and again I cried: 'Oh Mir! Oh Mir!', but were there a Mir!

Aakhir ko uski raah mem hum aap gum huay
Muddat mein paai yaar ki yeh justujoo ki tarha

I lost myself upon the road towards her.
Ah! How I searched and sought to find my way to love!

Spiritual performance

The sufis laid great emphasis on the spiritual performance of the qawwali, and this bears imprint of the Indian concept of deep relationship between music and spirituality. The literal meaning of *raaga* is 'colour', 'emotion' or 'wakening the emotions'. The *vina* played by the legendary Sarasvati or the flute of Krishna are in fact allusions to the eternal melody of the Divine Spirit, which summons the contaminated human soul back to its source. In India for thousands of years music has been treated as a holy ritual, which through the harmony of emotion and contemplation opens up the closed path leading towards spiritual reality. For this reason the *bhajan kirtan* has for centuries played a prominent role in temple ritual. Indeed it is impossible to con ceive of worship in India without *sangeet.* In Islam help came from vocal melody *(khush-ilhani),* but musical instruments have no place in Islamic worship. Among the sufis for the purpose of awakening spirituality, the custom of employing vocal *sama'* or instrumental *sama'* -i.e. the use of the *rabab* (rebeck), the *daf* (a kind of small drum), the *nai* (a kind of flute) and the qawwali - can be seen in this perspective. Since the employment of music as pointed our earlier, to excite the emotions runs contrary to the spirit of Islam, some sufis were inclined to accept only vocal *sama';* others saw no harm in instrumental *sama',* simply because it was an aid for sharpening the emotions. Since the Indian mind was always affected by music, among the sufis of India music established itself as part of a great tradition. Most of the Chishti shaikhs regarded *sama'* as legitimate, and the main causes of the excitement that could be witnessed in many seminaries and sufi convents were the qawwali gatherings, which were always accompanied by rapture and displays of ecstasy *(wajd* or *haal).* Many Indian sufis were themselves great experts in the musical art; several Urdu poets also had a great fondness for music and regarded *sama'* as legitimate – Thus grew the qawwali tradition which for obvious reasons is indigenous and peculiar to the subcontinent.

Shaikh Bahauddin Baajan (d.1506) was one of the most renowned sufis of the Deccan. He was a great musician and took as his nom-de-plume *(takhallus)* 'Baajan', which probably reflects his passion (cf. *baaja* 'musical instrument, *bajaana* 'to play an instrument'). One of his *dohas* (quoted in *Urdu-i Qadeem* p. 42) sheds light on the way that sufis practised *sama'* in his day:

Yuuun baajun baajay ray asraar chhajay
Mandul mun mein dhamkay rubaab rung mein jhamkay
Sufi un per thumkay
Yuuun baajun baajay ray asraar chhajay

See! Baajan plays and magic spreads around.
The rebeck starts to flash in ecstasy.
And in the soul the beating drums resound,
While sufis sway, led by the melody.
Then Baajan plays and magic spreads around.

The poet 'Abdul Vali 'Uzlat (c. 1700), a contemporary of Vali, composed a work entitled *Raagmala* 'The Garland of Ragas', on the subject of Indian *raagas* and *raaginis*, the manuscript of which is in the British Library. The composition of Sultan Ibrahim 'Adil Shah (d. 1618), entitled *Kitab-i Nauras*, is considered to be an extremely important work on Indian music. The Persian poet, Zuhuri, who was present at his court in Bijapur, wrote a masterly preface to this work, which in the annals of Persian Literature is known as *Sih Nasr-i Zuhuri* 'The three prose pieces of Zuhuri'. The tenth chapter of the *masnavi* of the famous Deccani poet Qazi Mahmud Bahri is written in praise of melody *(naghma)*, and the *masnavi Man Lagan* also includes a separate chapter on 'melody and its effects'. A few verses of Bahri are worth quoting:

Jin raag ko dost kar liya hai
Tu Boojhh î beishauk auliya hai

Yo raag aa aag hi jalaay
Yo raag nay baag phhar khhay
Is raag son josh dard ko hai
Hor oonch kharosh mard ko hai

The one who loves the raga's tune,
Know him to be a saint indeed.
The raga puts to flame the fire;
It frees the bridle from the steed.

The raga turns all pain to joy,
And by its rapture man is freed.

From numerous verses composed by some of the most distinguished Urdu poets, who flourished from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the present day, we can see how the practice of employing music and song in *sama'* has advanced without interruption. On the subject of *sama'* the respected scholar and poet Hasrat Mohani (1875-1951) writes:

> In my opinion *sama'* is legitimate; indeed for the sufi it is a necessity, because if we disregard all the evidence which has been handed down by tradition, we must admit that any activity, which produces rapture in the soul and delight in the heart, cannot justly be called unlawful.

After the independence the popularity of singing the *ghazal* and the qawwali has become even more widespread. Because of the partition of the subcontinent the number of Urdu speakers in India has declined, but in spite of the difficulties Urdu faces, the popularity of the qawwali has not only n*ot* waned, but indeed it has grown apace. The main reason for this is to be found in the depths of the collective subconscious of the people and in the ability of the qawwali to fulfil the emotional and spiritual demands of the common psyche. Moreover the recent world wide boom in the film industry has had a hand in the popularization of both the *ghazal* singing and the qawwali. The growth of the electronic media, the general use of the video and C.D., and, in addition to these, the film, the theatre and satellite television have all added much to the popularity of the qawwali. Taking into account present changes and demands, it would be quite appropriate to say that the qawwali, which had its beginnings in the middle ages as the religious music of the sufi seminaries, has today become a part of general music and popular culture.

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NOTES

1. *roopak* is a time cycle in Indian music
2. *deepak* (lit. 'lamp') is the name of a *raaga* which is said to have the power to ignite fire.

The *Ghazal* in English :
Reading Likeness, Reading Difference

ANISUR RAHMAN

> How is it, Ghalib, that your grief, resurrected in pieces, has
> found its way to this room from your dark house in Delhi?
> – from a *ghazal*, Adrienne Rich

> Let's drink to that point–like Hafiz
> – from "Winter", a *ghazal*, Judith Wright

In the pursuit of writing their own kinds of poetry, Adrienne Rich and Judith Wright, the American and Australian poets, are reminded of Ghalib (1797-1869) and Hafiz (1389-90), the redoubtable genius of the *ghazal*[1] in India and Persia. It is difficult to say for certain whether it is the infectious appeal of the *ghazal*, or the lasting names of its practitioners, that has elicited the attention of the poets writing in English and representing a culture that do not approximate the sources, in Urdu and Persian, even remotely. One may, however, say that theoretically it is the form, rather than its practitioner, that engages a writer's attention as it is through the form only that an individual practitioner may aspire to achieve excellence and reach beyond the confines of one's language and times. Consequently, it may be appropriately said that in writing their *ghazal*, Ghalib and Hafiz did a double-job of authenticating the form, as also acquiring their individual excellence in turn. The two poets, from amongst a number of them spread over ages, ultimately became complementary to the *ghazal*, and in their possible effort to perfect the medium, perfected their art, and vice-versa.

Adrienne Rich and Judith Wright are not the only notable practitioners of the *ghazal* in the English language; it has had several of them, and it has also been written in languages other than English. German poets–Friedrich Schlegal (1722-1829), Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832), Friedrich Ruckert (1788-1866), andVon Platen (1796-1835)–have left behind their individual experiments with this form. Schlegal was an Orientalist who studied Sanskrit and made his contribution to German Oriental studies, while Goethe, a leading figure in German romanticism, deliberately imitated Persian models and published his poetry in a collection, interestingly called *West-Ostlicher Divan (West-Easterly Divan*, 1819). Similarly, Platen, a master of twelve languages, who culled from the rich traditions of the world literature, chose *Ghaslen* (1821) to be the title of his first anthology of poems; while Ruckert, a Professor of Oriental Studies, drew upon his discipline to write his poetry marked by formal excellence. In the spirit of Goethe and Platen, Ruckert also chose *Ghaslen* (1822) for the title of his collection of poems. How did this happen, one may wonder. The classical discipline of these poets, it may be asserted, their interest in the Orient, their romantic leanings, and their affair with languages, explain their interest in the *ghazal*, and their choice for *divan* and *ghaslen* for their titles. This tendency to outgrow the confines of their own sources further underlines their keenness to broaden the frontiers of German literature which they have been able to do with distinction.

It would be relevant here to refer to a related issue which may help us understand as to how far the *ghazal* lends itself to its adoption in a language other than the one to which it was born, and the group of languages into which it has developed ever since. A reference may be made here to the similarities Muhammad Sadiq draws (1964:37-39) between the poetry of romantic love, of which *ghazal* is an important offshoot, and the European love poetry on the strength of David Daiches in *Literature and Society*. Daiches refers to the tradition of courtly love arising in Provence and its popularity through the Middle Ages from the Mediterranean to the North Sea, its impact on the western thought, the concept of love in the poetry of the troubadours, its spreading over in France, its appearance on the English literary scene in the fourteenth century, its continuance in European literature and thought in the subsequent three centuries, and its being the basis of the modern conception of romantic love (1938:39-41). Drawing upon Daiches, Sadiq makes his point:

> With its self-effacing lover, ardent but jealous, and its cold, haughty and proverbially inaccessible beloved, what a host of resemblances between the poetry of the troubadours and the ghazal, in tone, subject-matter, and sentiment. Here is rich material for a comparative study of literature. (38)

Sadiq buttresses his point further by referring to the conventions of drawing an inventory of the lady's charms, and of portraying the desolate/broken lover as in the poetry of the *ghazal* and draws it, on the strength of John Livingston Lowes (1930:43), that there are "exact parallels" (38) in European literature. The intention here in referring to the German poets in particular, and the European tradition of love poetry in general, is to underline the fact that *ghazal*, in much of its traditional content, may be taken to be corresponding, sometimes quite closely, to these sources in European literature even though it has not been, and can not be written exactly the way it is written in the language/(s) of its birth/development. In order to make this point we need to look at the definition given to the *ghazal*, its origin and development, its usual themes, its nature, and its aesthetics.

Literally, the *ghazal* means "talking to the lady love". It is written in the form of couplets *(ash 'ar*, plural of *sher)* each independent of the other, following a set rhythm and a given rhyme scheme.[2] It originally consisted of five couplets but it could be even more. The first couplet is known as the *matia* where both the lines have a *qafia* and a *radeef* which determine the rhyme scheme through the following couplets. In the last couplet, known as *maqta*, the poet sometimes makes use of his pen name. It is supposed to have originated from *nasib*, the erotic prelude to the *qasida* (panegyric) of the Arabic poetry in the late 7th century and developed independently with its own features of reference. Apart from Arabic, it found a suitable clime for itself in Persian, Turkish, and subsequently in Urdu. In spite of their basic resemblances, the *ghazals* in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu have their own features of reference.[3] They represent different cultural and linguistic ethos and bear out the marks of the times and climes. It is the archetypal poetry of romantic love *(ishq-i-majazf)*, both for the male as for the female *(mashuq/mehboob)*, though it extends itself to the love of God *(ishq-i-haqeeqi)*. In creating its own world, the *ghazal* has institutionalized the concepts of ecclesia *(kalisa)*, monastery *(dair)*, the censor *(muhtasib)*, the guard of faith *(shaikh/brahmin)*, the sermoniser *(nasih)*, the idol *(but)*, the rival *(raqeeb)*, the beloved as killer *(qatil)*, the messanger *(paighambar)*, the confidant *(razdan)*, the cup-bearer *(saqi)*, the tavern *(maikhana)*, the old man of the tavern *(peer-i-mughan)*, the bird's nest *(qafas)*, separation (*hijr*), union (*wisal*) and many others. It has been one of the most popular art forms ever since its origin in Arabic and adoption in Persian, Turkish, and Urdu. It lends itself to complex themes, metaphysical concepts, mystical apprehensions, as also the mundane and the ordinary. It favours the language of indirection, understatement, and double entendre. On account of its ability to appeal to the head and the heart equally well, the couplets of the *ghazal* entered the common parlance of the educated people and marked the ready wit of the user. The modern *ghazal* has come a long way from its early imprints and has disengaged from the tradition-bound romantic-cum-mystical and other institutionalized concepts. It incorporates all the odds and evens of life, makes little distinction between the poetic and the non-poetic, the formal and the non-formal. It is essentially secular in its make-up and has reached a cross section of the audience through the popular press and the films. Singers have developed individual schools of *ghazal gayaki* and helped it achieve greater popularity among the masses.

The *ghazal* has been subjected to a variety of interpretations. Some purists hold it responsible for corrupting the innocent minds as it does not have a unity of subject/purpose. They consider it a semi-savage form of poetry[4] devoid of all discipline and it survives only because of its sound which makes the sense its subservient. On the other hand, the *ghazal* has been taken to be the prestige of poetry, a series of climaxes,[5] where each couplet is a world complete unto itself. They consider it to be the highest form of concentrated speech which makes severe demands upon the poet to express himself within the given framework of its formal structure. The complaint against *qafia* and *radeef* being the limiting factors, does not hold good as it is a part of its formal structure and tests the poet's ability to operate within those limitations with precision.

The question one may naturally ask now is whether the *ghazal*, as described above, can be written or imitated in English, or for that matter in any of the Western languages. The point to keep in mind is that the *ghazal* does not only reflect a certain culture; it also has a clearly defined culture of its own. A poet writing in English cannot, therefore, hope to approximate the Perso-Arabic *ghazal*', he may at best, reinvent his own kind of *ghazal*. It is all the more relevant because there are no such forms of poetry available in English which may serve as models for the poet. Further, it is equally important to remember that the oral-aural system of the Perso-Arabic poetry is sharply different from that of the English poetry and in view of this the poet attempting to write his *ghazal* in English may only explore his own rhythmic apprehension which may carry the burden of his experience rather than imitate the Perso-Arabic *ghazal* and find a poor substitute for his auditory imagination.

Literary forms from one language enter the domain of another language/(s) in a process of mutual exchange of stylistic features and linguistic patterns. This interaction, consequently, results in supplementing and enriching the indigenous literary capital. The case of *haiku* may be referred to here to make this point. Except for the conventional feature of *haiku* which is written in three lines of five, seven, and five syllables each, other conventions of the Japanese *haiku* have undergone changes in the Western languages. Since *haiku* derives its strength from its concrete imagery, precise syllabic form, and understatement, it found favor with modernists like Ezra Pound and Amy Lowell but in all the poets *haiku* emerged as a different entity than what it was in the original Japanese. Similarly, the *ghazal* in English, at its best, may discover its own parameters of formal structure, sound patterns, thematic preferences, and linguistic precision in order to make its appeal.

Two examples of the *ghazal* in English from Adrienne Rich and Judith Wright would be appropriate to refer to in this context in order to mark the limitations of their *ghazal*.. as also their individual merit. Before doing so, let us see how Mirza Ghalib, who inspired Adrienne Rich and some of her American contemporaries, was rendered into English by them, and how they understood Ghalib and the form of the *ghazal*. This happened in an extremely interesting manner when, at the time of the preparation for Mirza Ghalib centenary celebrations in 1968, Adrienne Rich, W.S. Merwin, William Stafford, David Ray, Thomas Fitzsimmons, Mark Strand, and William Hunt, were introduced to the *ghazals* of Ghalib by Aijaz Ahmed. Ahmed made a remarkable experiment of great academic worth by giving them the literal translations and explanatory notes on the *ghazals of* Ghalib and helped them produce their own "versions", which they ultimately did in free verse. Several of these versions appeared in American journals[6] before Ahmad put them together along with some more versions and a detailed 'Introduction' in his volume entitled *Ghazals of Ghalib* (1971). A few samples would be interesting to read. Here are some couplets rendered by diverse hands:

> *Sub kahan kucch lala-o-gul mem numayan ho gaein*
> *Khak mem kya suratein hongi kepinhan ho gaein*
>
> Here and there in a rose or a tulip
> a few of the faces
> only a few
>
> but think of those that the dust
> keeps to itself (W.S.Merwin:76)
>
> Not all, only a few, return as the rose or the tulip;
> what faces there must be still veiled by the dust (Adrienne Rich: 78)
>
> Only the survivors come forth in the rose, the tulip;
> what faces have gone down under the dust! (Willaim Stafford:79)
>
> *Bazeecha-i-atfal hai duniya mere aage*
> *Hota hai shab-o-roz tamasha mere aage*
>
> To me this world is a children's playground (W.S.Merwin: 163)
>
> Since I began ogling colors in dime stores
> all manners of toys and baubles

> I have been ecstatic. It is like
> other habits I learned slowly, then sped up (David Ray: 164)

In the first three examples it would appear that the poets are able to comprehend the essential experience in almost the same manner though the first rendition is a little more different and removed from the two others both in terms of thematic and stylistic apprehension. Rich and Stafford render themselves with the same precision as in the original couplet but Merwin takes a little liberty both in representing the idea as also in rendering it in four lines instead of the two as in other cases, In another example, the two poets–Merwin and Ray–make drastic revisions over the original couplet and move farther away from Ghalib. They reduce and expand, respectively, the original idea beyond recognition. Reading through these versions, one comes across a variety of experiences. Hunt and Ray, quite often, move away from the original, while Merwin chooses to keep close to the original. On the other hand, Stafford and Rich provide very satisfying examples of their understanding of the poet and the form of the ghazal as such. Let me quote a few examples from Rich:

> *Baske dushwar hai bar kam ka aasan hona*
> *Aadmi ko bhi mayassar nahin insan hona*
>
> Nothing comes very easy to you, human creature–
> least of all the skill to live humanely. (11)
>
> *Na gul-e-naghma boon na parda-i-saz*
> *Main hoon apni shikast ki awaz*
>
> I'm neither the loosening of song nor the close-drawn tent
> of music;
> I'm the sound, simply, of my own breaking. (58)
>
> *Har qadam doori-e-manzil hai numayan mujh se*
> *Men raftar se bhage hai biyaban mujh se*
>
> Every step I take unrolls the distance further;
> racing the desert, it lengthens underfoot. (92)
>
> *Mange hai phir kisi ko lab-e-ham per hawas*
> *Zulf-e-siyah rukh pe pareshan kiye hue.*
>
> Again I watch for her at her window
> waiting for wind in her black hair (125)

The above examples amply demonstrate Rich's understanding of this alien form of poetry and her effort to catch up with its spirit which lies, to a great extent, in maintaining its precision. She adheres to the two-line format of the *ghazal* in her versions also and tries to create an inner rhythm in them while also respecting the level of wit, and the associations of images and verbal expressions of the original. In a letter to Ahmad, which he quotes in his "Introduction" to his book. Rich expresses her great appreciation for Ghalib and tells how she tried to develop her strategy for recreating her versions of the poet. It would be interesting to read that:

> The marvelous thing about these ghazals is precisely (for me) their capacity for both concentration and a gathering, cumulative effect... I needed a way of dealing with very complex and scattered material which was demanding a different kind of unity from that imposed on it by the isolated, single poem: in which certain experiences needed to find both their intensest rendering and to join with other experiences not logically or chronologically connected in any obvious way. I've been trying to make the couplets as autonomous as possible and to allow the unity of ghazal to emerge from underneath, as it were, through images, through associations, private and otherwise... .For me, the couplets work only when I can keep them from being too epigrammatic; what I'm trying for, not always successfully, is a clear image or articulation behind which there are shadows, reverberations, reflections of reflections. In other words, something that will not remind the Western readers of haiku or any other brief, compact form, such as Pope's couplet in English, or Greek anthology, (xxv-xxvi)

For Rich, translating Ghalib was a very different kind of engagement than writing her own poetry. She obviously enjoyed this vocation and developed her own strategy for doing so. She rendered Ghalib for a readership that was supposedly American/ English. She was quite well aware of the fact that a rendition owed its success to two conditions: one, that the translator must be able to fully appreciate and respect the source language writer and second, that the target reader should be kept in mind, in addition to other conditions. Rich's success is also because of the fact that she, being a poet, is singularly sensitive to the nuances of the feelings in the original couplets and discovers her modes of approximating those with her own sensitive treatment in the target language.

Inspired by Ghalib and the form of the *ghazal*, Rich ultimately composed her own *ghazals* and published them in *Leaflets* (1969) as "Homage to Ghalib" and subsequently in *The Will to Change* (1971) as "The Blue *Ghazals*". The seventeen *ghazals* included in *Leaflets* and nine in *The Will to Change* were composed within a short period of time as the dates along with the *ghazals* show. They all seem to have come in a swift succession and offer remarkable points for study. Some examples from *Leaflets* would bear that out:

> When I look at that wall I shall think of you
> and of what you did not paint there. (339)
>
> 7.12.68.
>
> To mutilate privacy with a single foolish syllable
> is to throw away the search for the one necessary word. (339)
>
> 7.12.68.
>
> "It may be if I had known them I would have loved them.
> You were American, Whitman, and those words are yours. (341)
>
> 7.14.68
>
> Did you think I was talking about my life?
> I was trying to drive a tradition up against the wall. (342)
> 7.14.68
>
> When they mow the fields, I see the world reformed
> as if by snow, or fire, or physical desire. (344)
>
> 7.16.68
>
> Killing is different now : no fingers round the throat.
> No one feels the wetness of the blood on his hands. (347)
> 7.24.68
>
> When we fuck, there too we are remoter
> than the fucking bodies of lovers used to be? (347)
>
> 7.24.68
>
> LeRoi! Eldridge ! listen to us, we are ghosts
> condemned to haunt the cities where you want to be at home. (350)
>
> 7.26.68

> When they read this poem of mine, they are translators.
> Every existence speaks a language of its own. (353)
>
> 8.4.68
>
> I'm speaking to you as woman to man:
> when your blood flows I want to hold you in my arms. (355)
>
> 8.8.68
>
> How did we get caught up fighting this forest fire,
> We, who were only looking for a still place in the woods?
> (355)
>
> 8.8.68

While examining these couplets, drawn from various *ghazals*, we may draw certain broad conclusions. The points of likeness in the *ghazals* of Rich with the *ghazal* in the native language are:

(a) each couplet stands for a unit of idea,
(b) each couplet is independent of the other,
(c) five to six couplets comprise a *ghazal*,
(d) the *ghazal* follows the pattern of the couplets rather than stanzas, as some poets in English have done,
(e) a variety of ideas/issues/experiences find place in the *ghazal* and that
(f) the *ghazal* is not titled .

The only point of departure is that these *ghazals* are not rhymed as they do not follow a given structure and metrics in adherence to a *qafia* and *radeef* and are written in free verse. This cannot be taken as a demerit; on the contrary a deliberate attempt at following a rhyme scheme would have imposed severe limitations on the free flow of Rich's poetic diction, and on her apprehension of reality in words. Moreover, imposing a rhyme scheme would have gone entirely against the nature of her poetry as also against the contemporary poetics. A close reading of the couplets would reveal that she enjoys this liberty and seeks an opportunity to appropriate her poetic skill in the writing of a new kind of text. Equally remarkable is the way she apprehends her world and tries to negotiate with it. The couplets provide commentaries on the political and social predicament of contemporary America, and on the aspects of a life she lives as a woman and a poet. She appropriates this form to create her own kind of the American *ghazal* making references to the dreamers for a new order like Walt Whitman, Galileo, LeRoi Jones (Imamu Amiri Baraka) etc. Her estrangement with the existing order helps her develop a measured detachment in the couplet form and acquire an ironic perspective on her life and times. She yearns to create a new reference for existence and wishes to impart a precise role to language. Language, as such, has been a major concern for Rich which undergoes a test in the process of writing of her *ghazal.*

It is important to note that Rich's *ghazal* corresponds closely with the new *ghazal* in making space for ideas and experiences reflecting on the contemporary life, its existential dilemma, its absurdity. She seems to address herself, and through herself the others, as she takes up new issues which she had not taken up in her poems so far. The couplets refer to the issue of marginalisation of individuals and human society, and decay in politics and culture. They mark the precarious balance between politics and sexuality, and underline the corrosion of all-round values in contemporary American life and times. It adopts a language, bared of all conventional embellishments and stereotypes of poetic appeal. It is direct, more intimate than ever, and makes an effort to write the experience rather than allow the experience to call for its diction. Rich's *ghazal* takes note of this aspect and it goes well with her own preoccupation with what she calls the process of "languaging" the experience. She appropriately notes: "My *ghazals* are personal and public, American and twentieth century; but they owe much to the presence of Ghalib in my mind: a poet, self-educated and profoundly learned, who owned no property and borrowed his books, writing in an age of political and cultural break up" (1993:426).

A few more examples from "The Blue *Ghazals*" contained in *The Will to Change* may be seen in this context:

> Turning, turning their bruised leaves
> the trees stay awake all night in the wood. (368)
>
> 9/21/68
>
> Early and late I come and set myself against you,
> your phallic fist knocking blindly at my door. (368)
>
> 9/23/68

If I thought of my words as changing minds,
hadn't my mind also to suffer changes? (370)

12/13/68

The moment when a feeling enters the body
is political. This touch is political. (372)

5/4/69

These *ghazals* also follow the same pattern and style of utterance. In fact, all the twenty six of them included in two anthologies bear the same mark of composition. Some of them are dedicated to Sheila Rotner, Aijaz Ahmed, A.H.C., Wallace Stevens, and LeRoi Jones (Imamu Amiri Baraka). Some of the couplets, in spite of being independent entities, enter the domain of the other couplet but they develop a new image and test the potential of poetic expression in ways more than one. Rich's *ghazal* is a new addition to the American literary harvest which others have practiced after her.

Another remarkable brand of the *ghazal* may be found in Judith Wright, a major Australian poet marked for her lyric grace and brilliant craftsmanship. It would be interesting to note that a poet of rural epiphany, a concerned individual regarding nuclear warfare and environmental damage should have been attracted towards this very alien form of poetry. As her poems are responses, prophecies, prayers, and visions, she exhibits a variety of thematic concerns and expresses herself in shifting tones and forms. Her twelve *ghazals* put together under a title "Shadow of Fire" are included in her anthology *Phantom Dwelling* (1985). All her *ghazals* bear a title which the *ghazal* tradition does not admit of as such, and the number of couplets in a ghazal range from six to twelve. In Wright's *ghazal* also, associations and images merge together and create a kind of flow and continuity we generally find in compositions known as poems. In this respect she moves a step beyond Rich whose associations and images operate within a marked area. Howsoever freer Wright's swing may be, they do not adversely tell upon the individual couplets as they remain independent in spite of being associated with the other couplet/couplets. The *ghazal* entitled "Rockpool" may be quoted here in full to bring this out:

Rockpool

My generation is dying, after long lives
swung from war to depression to war to fatness.

I watch the claws in the rockpool, the scuttle, the crouch–
green humps, the biggest barnacled, eaten by seaworms.

In comes the biggest wave, the irresistible
clean wash and back swirl. Where have the dead gone?

At night on the beach the galaxy looks like a grin
Entropy has unbraided Bernice's hair.

We've brought on our own cancers, one with the world.
I hang on the rockpool's edge, its wild embroideries:

Admire it, pore on it, this, the devouring and mating,
ridges of coloured tracery, occupants, all the living,

The stretching of toothed claws to food, the breeding
on the ocean's edge. "Accept it? Gad, madam, you had better."
(419)

This composition of seven couplets may be read as a continuous *ghazal*. The tradition of the continuous *ghazal* is available in the works of the past practitioners of this form. In such a tradition while each couplet may be read independently, it also forms part of the total composition. The couplets of "Rockpool" underline the ills of the modern society, the dangers of warfare, the element of inevitability in human fate, the cycle of birth, growth, decay, and perishing. It refers to history, back and forth, and goes deeper down to son of Jacob, and ancestor of one of the tribes of Israel in the last couplet. While the world is on the move, the rockpool remains a witness, the pool of all happenings, the archetypal cradle for rearing life. In the general pattern of Wright's *ghazals*, we have an idea or an image explored in couplet after couplet. While the titles of the *ghazals* bind the couplets together and give them a thematic unity, each couplet may also be conveniently separated from the body of the complete text without any loss of meaning or impairing the formal structure of the couplets or the *ghazals*. Wright is different from Rich in this respect but she is quite like her in referring to the stark experiences of the contemporary life. However, both the poets create substantial space for incorporating a broad range of experiences which brings them closer to the practitioners of the modem *ghazal.*

The *ghazal,* in its new incarnation, is an extremely liberal art form. It has broken the conditioned response of the reader towards itself in respect of a defined world of experience, pre-conceived notions of language, conventional tools of expression, and traditional treatment to the material. One of the reasons of its appeal to the poets writing in English today is that it offers free space for their associations and images. With the breaking of barriers between the literatures written in various languages, the *ghazal* is no longer an alien form. It has found its wider appeal and has traversed a long distance from the way the German poets of the early 19th century treated it.

The *ghazal* is now a tool in the hands of several poets writing their own brands of the English, the American, the Canadian, the Australian, or the postcolonial *ghazal.* It is a medium of cross cultural communication and literary influence, a mode of assimilating the worlds brilliantly spread beyond the thresholds of a defined cultural space.

NOTES

1. It has been variously spelt as *"ghazel," "ghasel,"* and *"ghazaf".* Currently it is spelt as *ghazal.*
2. *Ghazal is* a strict metrical composition. Each couplet falls under the given pattern *ofuqafia* (like: *hua, dawa, wafa* etc) followed by a mfee*l* (like: *kya hai, kya hai, kya hai).* Two couplets from Ghalib are quoted as illustration:

   Dil-e-nadan tujhe hua kya hai
   Akhir is dard ki dawa kya hai
   Hum ko un se wafa ki hai ummeed
   Jo nahinjanate wafa kya hai (emphasis added)
3. For a broader survey of ghazal, especially in Urdu, see Caria R. Petievich, *Assembly of Rivals'. Delhi, Lucknow and the Urdu Ghazal.* New Delhi:Manohar Publications, 1992; C.M.Naim, "Traditional Symbolism in the Modern Urdu *Ghazal," Languages and Areas Studies* presented to George V. Bobrinskoy, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1967, 105-111; Frances W. Pritchett, "Conventions in the Classical Urdu *Ghazal," Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* III I (Fall, 1979), pp. 60-77, "Orient Pearls Unstrung: The Quest for Unity in the Ghazal," *Edebiyat* (n.s.) 4 (1993), 119-35; Saleem

Ahmed, "The *Ghazal*, A Muffler and India," *Annual of Urdu Studies #2* (Chicago: 1982), pp. 53-83: Shamsur Rehman Faruqi, "Expression of the Indo-Muslim Mind in the Urdu *Ghazal*" and Gilani Kamran, "The Urdu Ghazal as Material for the Study of Muslim Society in South Asia," *Studies in the Urdu Ghazal and Prose Fiction* (ed.) Mohammad Umer Memon, Madison: South Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin, Publication No. 5, pp. 1-23 and 24-43.

4. Kalimuddin Ahmed in his *Urdu Shairi per Ek Nazar* (Urdu) has made this observation.
5. Firaq Gorakhpuri, an eminent practitioner of the *ghazal* in Urdu, has made this remark.
6. Versions by Adrienne Rich and William Stafford appeared in *The Hudson Review*, vol XXII, No. 4, winter 1969-70; by W.S.Merwin in *Poetry*, August-September, 1970; by Thomas Fitzsimmons, David Ray, William Stafford and Mark Strand *Malahat Review*, No. 14, April 1970.

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"The Effective State of Our Being": Karma Yoga in Tilak, Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo

KAVITA A. SHARMA

Introduction

The *Gita* made a profound influence on the nationalist leadership. It influenced Lokmanya Tilak (1856-1920), Mahatama Gandhi (1869-1948), and Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), all as they struggled for India's independence. Introduced to it at an early age, each one of them had an occasion to deepen their understanding of it in prison. Of them Tilak was the oldest and he wrote his magnum opus, the *Gita Rahasya* in 1907 while he was serving a six year prison term in Mandalay. It is interesting that each one of them arrived at different interpretations of karma yoga, the yoga of action.

Tilak was introduced to a Marathi translation of the *Gita* when he was sixteen years old as the task of reading out a Prakrit commentary on it called *Bhasha-vivriti* to his father fell to his lot. Mahatma Gandhi first got acquainted with the *Gita* when he was studying in England through two English brothers who read it regularly. They asked him to join them which Gandhi did although he did not know Sanskrit at that time. He read its English translation by Sir Edwin Arnold in 1888-1889. Captivated by its message especially that in the last nineteen verses of the second chapter which deals with karmayoga, he started reading the *Gita* everyday. At first he read as many Gujarati translations of it as were available and then only in Sanskrit. During his imprisonment he studied it in detail and later translated it into Gujarati. Sri Aurobindo was struck by the *Gita's* 'gospel of action' before he was even thirty; he wrote several articles on it in *Karmayogin*. Its idea of "desireless duty" or "nishkama karma" was his guiding principle during his revolutionary days. It was, however, during his year of solitary confinement in the Alipore jail that the *Gita* became a felt experience on his pulses: "I was not only to understand (Gita) intellectually but to realize what Sri Krishna demanded of Arjuna and what he demands of those who aspire to do his work".[1]

Therefore, these nationalist leaders drew inspiration from *Gita* especially and naturally from its call to action in spite of all odds and after overcoming all attachments thereby acting with a single minded sense of purpose. The crux of the issue with regard to action was the value to be given to violence. Of the three, neither Tilak nor Sri Aurobindo found any absolute value is non-violence. To just give one example, the Sedition Committee Report, dealt in detail with the devastation caused by the plague in 1897.[2] It led to the institution of house-to-house visitations in Poona and compulsory evacuation of plague-infected houses. This caused much alarm and resentment. Initially Tilak wrote favourably about the Government's efforts but later he imputed not only to the subordinate officials but to the Government itself a deliberate direction to oppress people. The plague Commissioner, Mr. Rand came to be gradually regarded as tyrannical. Even while the plague was raging, the sixtieth jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign was celebrated. Returning from a jubilee banquet at the Government house in Poona, Mr. Rand was shot dead together with Lt. Ayerat on 27th June 1898. Tilak's articles in the *Kesari* that followed finally led to his arrest on charges of sedition as he seemed to present an apology for political assassination.[3]

During Tilak's trial, references were made to two incriminating articles in the *Kesari* entitled "Shivaji's utterances". Tilak had been instrumental in getting the Ganpati festival and the Shivaji coronation festival instituted. The latter was held on the 12th of

June, 1897. One of the speakers at the festival was reported to have said:

> Every Hindu, every Maratha, to whatever party he may belong, must rejoice at this Sivaji festival. We all are striving to gain our lost independence, and this terrible load is to be uplifted by us all in combination. It will never be proper to place obstacles in the way of any person, who, with a true mind, follows the path of uplifting this burden in the manner he deems fit. Our mutual dissensions impede our progress greatly. If anyone be crushing down the country from above, cut him off, but do not put impediments in the way of others..... All occasions like the present festival which tend to unite the whole country must be welcome.[4]

Another speaker observed:

> The people who took part in the French Revolution denied that they had committed murder and asserted that they were only removing thorns from their paths. Why should not the same argument be applied to Maharashtra?
>
> The President at the festival meeting, Tilak himself said: "Did Sivaji commit a sin in killing Afzal Khan (the Muhammadan General) or not? The answer to that question can be found in the Mahabharat itself. Srimat Krishna's advice in the Gita is to kill even our own teachers and our kinsmen. No blame attaches to any person if he is doing deeds without being actuated by a desire to reap the furits of his deeds. Sri Sivaji did nothing with a view to fill the void of his own stomach. With benevolent intensions he murdered Afzal Khan for the good of others. If thieves enter our house and we have not sufficient strength to drive them out, we should without hesitation shut them up and burn them alive. God has not conferred upon the foreigners the grant inscribed on a copper-plate of the kingdom of Hindusthan. The Maharaja (Sivaji) strove to drive them away from the land of his birth. He did not thereby commit the sin of coveting what belonged to others. Do not circumscribe your vision like a frog in a well; get out of the Penal Code and enter the extremely high atmosphere of the Srimat Bhagavad Gita and consider the actions of great men.[5]

Sri Aurobindo too did not believe that non-violence had any absolute value that had to be followed as the only course of action. In this *Gita* was a good guide:

> A certain class of minds shrink from aggressiveness as it were a sin. Their temperament forbids them to feel the delight of battle and they look on what they cannot understand as something monstrous and sinful. "Heal hate by love, drive out injustice by justice, slay sin by righteousness' is their cry. Love is a scared name, but it is easier to speak of love than to love... The Gita is the bet answer to those who shrink from battle as a sin and aggression as a lowering of morality.[6]

In *Bande Mataram*, too, he said: "The choice by a subject nation of the means it will use for vindicating its liberty is best determined by the circumstances of its servitude.[7] One of the courses, "open to an oppressed nation is that of armed revolt... This is the old time-honoured method which the oppressed or enslaved have always adopted by preference in the past and will adopt in the future if they see any chance of success; for it is the readiest and swiftest, the most thorough in its results, and demands the least powers of endurance and suffering and the smallest and briefest sacrifices.[8]

Hence, all these leaders followed the karmayoga of *Gita* but each in his own way.

Gita as a Seditious Book

One man's food is another's poison. The *Gita* is a sacred text for Hindus but for Justice S.A.T. Rowlett, who was the President of the Sedition Committee (1908), it was an instrument of subversion and sedition. According to him, the Bengal revolutionaries used the teachings of the Bhagawad Gita, as also the teachings of Vivekanand "to create an atmosphere suitable for the execution of their projects".[9] The time was also ripe for it as Justice Rowlett says, "But neither the religious teachings of Bhagavad Gita would have afforded so moving a text to preach from had not the whole world, and especially the Asiatic world, been electrified and amazed by the victories of Japan over Russia..."[10] At another place, the report states:

> For their own initiates the conspirators devised a remarkable series of textbooks. The Bhagavad Gita, the writings of Vivekanand, the lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi, were part of the course; and in the words of Mr. Justice Mukharji: "such principles as the religious principal of absolute surrender to the Divine Will were employed by designing unscrupulous

> men as potent means to influence and unbalance weak-minded persons and thus ultimately bend to become instruments in the commission of nefarious crimes from which they might otherwise recoil with horror.[11]

Hence, as Michel Danino has pointed out, the revolutionaries of Bengal and Maharashtra drew such inspiration from the Gita that the colonial authorities came to regard it as the 'gospel of terrorism' and it became one of the most sought after evidence in police raids. Sir Aurobindo himself is said to have initiated several revolutionaries by making them swear on the Gita that they would do everything to liberate India from foreign yoke. However, in *Karmayogin,* he took strong exception to the Gita being regarded as a seditious book:

> We strongly protest against the brand of suspicion that has been sought to be placed in many quarters on the teaching and possession of the Gita – our chief national heritage, our hope for the future, our great force for the purification of the moral weaknesses that stain and hamper our people.[12]

Tilak and Karmayoga

Tilak was convinced that the *Gita* was essentially a text that preached karmayoga. The commentaries on it that went before him seemed to emphasize spiritual knowledge, devotion and renunciation and this became so dominant that the yoga of action appeared to recede into the background. This puzzled Tilak. He could not understand why so much stress had been laid on the attainment of moksha through Gyana or Bhakti when the whole aim of Krishna's teachings to the dejected Arjuna was to motivate him to fight. He decided to put all these aside and undertake an independent reading of the *Gita*. For him its essence was karmayoga, or desireless action.

According to Tilak, the *Gita* was propounded at a time when "whether to act or renounce' was considered a question of great importance before deciding whether an action was to be regarded as good or bad. Most commentaries on *Gita,* he found, highlighted renunciation as the primary teaching and action or karma yoga as secondary. He did not find in the *Gita* any conflict between knowledge or gyana and right action or karma as imagined by what he called the School of Renunciation. For him the *Gita* also showed that the fundamental elements in brahmavidya or the science of Brahman and Bhakti or the path of devotion were the foundation of ethics and good behaviour. Hence, the *Gita* showed the path to be adopted in life by properly harmonizing Knowledge, Renunciation, Right Action and Devotion. Thus, while it dwelt on Knowledge, Renunciation and Devotion, it was essentially in the context of Right or Proper Action. Arjuna had made a clear request to Krishna: "Do not confuse me by placing before me several courses of conduct, but point out to me definitely only one course, which is the proper course".[13] It was clear, therefore, said Tilak, that the *Gita* had to be in support of one particular opinion. The rest was only arguments that pointed to the right path after dispelling all confusions that different teachings caused.

For Tilak, the *Gita* explained the most perfect and complete condition of the Self, or what is the ideal of the highest manhood. In doing so it established a logical and irrefutable harmony not only between Devotion or Bhakti and Gyan or knowledge but ultimately between both these and the duties of ordinary life enjoyed by the Shastras. It thus inspired the mind bewildered by the vicissitudes of life to calmly and desirelessly adhere to the path of duty. The conversation between Sri Krishna and Arjuna was essentially about action, the impending war and hence, karma yoga to fight in these circumstances with detachment without looking at the fruits of action. Even individuals who acquired spiritual knowledge had to still perform duties pertaining to their status of life as long as they lived. Tilak gave several examples from the life of Vyasa himself, the author of Mahabharata. In spite of being an ascetic, a *rishi*, a sage and a priest, he had to do his duty at every point in the epic whether he was heeded to or not, whether he failed or succeeded.[14]

Tilak felt that the great commentators on the Gita who had gone before him had a doctrine or hypothesis into the framework of which they tried to read the *Gita*. He was thinking chiefly of Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya and Madhvacharya. Each he felt was trying to interpret the message of Gita from a preconceived theory but he wanted the doctrinal method to be given up. Citing *mimansa* writers, he said that in order to interpret a work seven factors had to be taken into account and all had to be considered. The first two were the beginning and the end of the book. Every writer wrote with some motive or aim in mind and when that object was accomplished, he completed his book. Therefore, the commencement and end of the book had to be first examined in determining the purport of the book. Once this had been done, he said, it had to be considered what were things that were repeated or reiterated in the work at several places and times. This was because whenever a writer thought that it was essential to convey something, he naturally repeated it. The fourth and fifth factors were whether the work had anything new to say and what was the impact of it. Unless the author had something new to say, he usually did not write a new book; at least that was the situation before the event of the printing press. Also, it was important to find out what effect had been achieved because obviously that was what the writer wanted to convey if he was successful. The sixth and seventh factors were the means used to establish or prove a fixed fact. The writer dealt with many things as and when the occasion arose whether by way of illustration or comparison to show similarity or difference so that the principal issue or hypothesis could be established. However, these were only supplementary to the main fact sought to be elucidated. Finally the author refuted all things that would prove contrary to his case and then systemically marshaled arguments to support it.[15]

The *Gita* is Krishna's preaching to Arjuna at the critical moment before the war actually started with the idea of inducing him to perform his duties, that is, to fight. When Arjuna saw whom he would have to battle and kill in order to win the kingdom of Hastinapur, he thought he was being pushed into greatest of sins as they were his grandfather, uncles, teachers, brothers, friends and all those whom he held dear. He became dejected. On the one hand his dharma was to fight and on the other was the devotion to his preceptors, family, ancestors, relatives and others. He laid down his arms and he turned to Sri Krishna to put him on the right path. Naturally in such a situation, Sri Krishna could not be explaining to him moksha through devotion or knowledge of the Brahman. He could not be advising renunciation to him. On the contrary, his purpose was to use every means and every argument at his command to make him fight. But if this war had to be it had to be won it had to be fought in a disinterested frame of mind as otherwise Arjuna's emotional involvement would paralyze him.

He could not be also allowed to focus on the end result because Krishna was aware that victory for him would be as bitter and barren as defeat and defeat would of course be the greatest ignominy after which no life was possible. Contemplation of either would make concentration on the battle impossible.

Arjuna's dilemma is the supreme ethical dilemma and whatever may be the controversy about the *Gita* being an integral part of the text or a later interpolation, it brings to a head the ethical dilemmas that *Mahabharata* forces its characters to confront. The *Mahabharata* within which the *Gita* is placed is a mine of ethical dilemmas of the kind experienced by Arjuna. It explains to ordinary persons in the simple form of stories how our great ancient personages have behaved in numerous difficult circumstances. The doubts of Arjuna are not groundless and cannot be brushed aside. They are horrifying and Arjuna is a warrior not a rishi. Even great sages in certain circumstances have been puzzled as to what to do and what not to do. But as Tilak points out, the very first advice of Sri Krishna to Arjun is that it is not proper to give up action on the ground that numerous difficulties arise in the consideration of what should be done and what should not be done.

For Tilak, the subject matter of the *Gita* is to show whether or not there are any means of ascertaining what course should be followed when a person is beset by ethical dilemmas and by what means to resolve them. The word karma comes from the root 'kri' which means 'doing' 'affairs' or activity and Yoga in this context, means some special skill, device, intelligent method or graceful way of performing actions. This is because all methods of yoga given in the *Gita* are not for the ascetic but for one who continues to perform actions so that he can do them in an equitable frame of mind.

The *Mahabharata* within which the *Gita* is set, makes it clear that all life is grey. There can be no absolute value given to non-violence or even for that matter to truth. For example, Arjuna in the *Mahabharata* says, "there are in this world so many micro organisms invisible to the naked eye, of which the existence can, however, be imagined, that merely by the moving one's eye-lids, their limbs will be destroyed".[16] Hence, absolute non-violence is not possible by the very nature of existence. In any case violence or himsa does not only mean destroying life but includes harming the minds or bodies of others. Therefore, ahimsa means not harming any living being in any way. "Forgiveness in all cases or warlikeness in all cases is not the proper thing. Therefore, O, my son! The wise have mentioned exceptions to the laws of forgiveness".[17]

Although at many places, it is reiterated, "there is no religion higher than Truth" and even "when the respective merits of a thousand asvamedha yajnas and of Truth were weighted in the scale, it was found that Truth weighed more".[18] But there were exceptions even to this. The sage Kaushik is punished for speaking the truth as it leads to the death of an innocent man at the hands of bandits. In the "Shantiparva", even Bhishma tells Arjuna, "If you can escape without speaking, then do not speak under any circumstances, but if it is necessary to speak, or if by not speaking you may rouse suspicion in the mind (of another) then, telling a lie has been found, after mature deliberation, to be much better than speaking the truth".[19] That is because the law of truth is not confined to speech. That conduct which leads to the benefit of all cannot be looked upon as objectionable merely on the ground that the vocal expression is untruthful. That by which everybody will be harmed is neither Truth nor Harmlessness. Narada says to Shuka on the authority of Sanat Kumar, "speaking the truth is proper thing, but rather than truth, speak that which will lead to the welfare for all; because that in which the highest welfare of all consists is in my opinion the real Truth".[20]

Mahabharata continuously pits choices in front of its protagonists. Tilak himself discusses several of them. There is the sage Vishwamitra ready to eat dog's meat to save his own life.[21] There is Chirkari disobeying his father and protecting his mother.[22] There is Arjuna ready to kill Yudhishthira when he insults his Gandiva but is prevented by Krishna who says that deprecating Yudhishthira would fulfil his vow because for respectable persons, deprecation is as painful as death.[23] Tilak's purpose is to emphasize that whatever action is required has to be performed.

However, in order to act like this a person has to become a yogi. Tilak explains what is meant at the end of Chapter 6 of the *Gita*, when Krishna tells Arjuna, "therefore, O Arjuna, become a yogi". In the given context, he says it has to mean a person who acts skillfully who is a karma yogi but not an ascetic.[24] In chapter 2, Arjuna is advised, "perform action, having become a yogi," and after that, "therefore, take shelter in yoga". It has to mean karma yoga.[25] Chapter 3 of the *Gita* clearly states, "yogis are persons who perform actions". 'Yoga' is also the name givèn to equanimity. It is also skill in action. Therefore, yoga that is continually talked about is karmayoga or desireless action.[26]

Sri Aurobindo's attitude to the use of.Violence

For Sri Aurobindo, too, non-violence could not be an absolute value. His articles from 1905-1910 in the *Bande Mataram* and *Karmayogin* showed that he admired the sacrifices and the revolutionary fervour of the terrorist youth seized by the government and condemned as criminals. In *Bande Mataram* he said that violence could be used by a nation to free itself but only if circumstances so demanded. He, of course, knew that random acts or terrorism could not bring about the country's freedom but he blamed the government for driving these patriotic young men to such activities.[27] Hence, up to the withdrawal from active politics Sri Aurobindo led a double political life. On the one hand he was the outspoken leader of the Nationalist party and on the other, he was the secret leader and inspirer of the violent, underground terrorist movement designed to utterly demoralize the British. This is because both methods led to the same goal, that is, of an independent India. In the "Doctrine of Passive Resistance", distinguishing between "Passive or defensive and active or aggressive resistance," Sri Aurobindo says.

> that while the method of the aggressive resister is to do something by which he can bring about passive harm to the Government, the method of the passive resister is to abstain from doing something by which he would be helping the Government, the time of attach is different. The passive method is especially suitable to countries where the Government depends mainly for the continuance of its administration on the voluntary help and acquiescence of the subject people.[28]

He faced the problem of violence squarely:

> Unless we have the hoṅesty and courage to look existence straight in the face, we shall never arrive at any effective

> solution of its discords and oppositions. We must see first what life and the world are..... Our very bodily life is a constant dying and being reborn, the body itself a beleaguered city attacked by assailing, protected by defending forces whose business is to devour each other.....War and destruction are not only a universal principle of our life here in its purely material aspects, but also of our mental and moral existence... It is impossible, at least as men and things are, to advance, to grow, to fulfil and still to observe really and utterly that principle of harmlessness which is yet placed before us as the highest and best law of conduct.[29]

What struck Aurobindo in his study of *Gita* was its bold "Gospel of action" and its stress on the kshatriya's "duty to protect the world from injustice".

> "The Christian and Buddhistic doctrine of turning the other cheek to the smiter", he scribbled in his notebooks, "is as dangerous as it is impracticable. (It is) a radically false moral distinction and the lip profession of an ideal which mankind has never been able or willing to carry into practice. The disinterested and desireless pursuit of duty is a gospel worthy of the strongest manhood; that of the cheek turned to the smiter is a gospel for cowards and weaklings. Babes and sucklings may practice it, because they must, but with others it is a hypocrisy.[30]

Arrested in 1908, he was sentenced to one year of solitary confinement in the Alipore jail. The imprisonment led to profound spiritual experiences. Soon after his unexpected acquittal in May 1909, in his famous speech at Uttarpara he recounted something of his experience: "He placed the Gita in my hands. His strength entered into me and I was able to do the Sadhana of the Gita".[31] He whose self is harmonized by yoga seeth the self abiding in all beings and all beings in the self; everywhere he sees the same.

He who sees Me every where and sees all in Me; I am not lost to him nor is he lost to me.[33]

This realization made him see the Oneness described in the *Gita:* It transformed the prison for him and the entire experience of imprisonment.

> I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was, imprisoned; no, it was

> Vasudeva who surrounded. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me his shade. I looked at the bars of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. Or I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch and felt the arms of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of my Friends and Lover... I looked at the prisoners in the jail, the thieves, the murderers, the swindlers, and as I looked at them I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana whom I found in these darkened souls and misused bodies.
>
> When the case opened... I was followed by the same insight. He said to me, "When you were cast into jail, did not your heart fail and did you not cry out to me, where is Thy protection? Look now at the Magistrate, look now at the Prosecuting Counsel". I looked and it was not the Magistrate whom I saw, it was Vasudeva, it was Narayana who was sitting there on the bench. I looked at the Prosecuting Counsel and it was not the Counsel for the prosecution that I saw; it was Sri Krishna who sat there and smiled. "Now do you fear? He said, "I am in all men and I overrule their actions and their words.[33]

In spite of this moving experience, speaking on the *Gita* at Khulna immediately after his release, he emphasized that a person had to act according to the duties demanded of the position that he found himself in his life.

> The virtue of the Brahmin is a great virtue; You shall not kill. This is what Ahimsa means. (But) if the virtue of Ahimsa comes to the kshatriya, if you say, "I will not kill", there is no one to protect the country. The happiness of the people will be broken down. Injustice and lawlessness will reign. The virtue becomes a source of misery and you become instrumental in bringing misery and conflict to the people.[34]

The teaching of the Gita, he said in his concluding words, "means perfection of action. It makes man great. It gives him the utter strength, the utter bliss which is the goal of life in the world".[35]

Gandhi and Non-Violence

What, for Gandhi, was the essential message can be seen in his introduction to his translation of the *Gita* which he completed in Kosani in Almora on 24 June 1929. It appeared in *Young India* in August 1931. He categorically stated that it had been his "endeavour, as also that of some companions to practice the teaching of Gita as" he had "understood it".[36]

Gita for Gandhi was not a historical work but under the guise of physical warfare, it described the duel that perpetually went on in the hearts of mankind. The physical warfare was only brought in to make the description of this internal duel more alluring. His study of *Mahabharata* confirmed this to him. The "Adiparva" ascribed superhuman or subhuman characteristics to the chief actors making it a story, a fable rather than a history. Thus Vyasa, the author of *Mahabharata* he felt was only using these people to drive home his religious theme. The text itself did not establish the necessity of war. It rather showed its futility. Vyasa had made the victors shed tears of sorrow and repentance and had left them with nothing but a legacy of miseries. Hence, for Gandhi. the second chapter of *Gita* did not teach the rules of warfare but rather elucidated the characteristics of a perfected man. Its whole design was inconsistent with the rules of conduct governing the relations between warring parties.[37]

Krishna of the *Gita* was perfection and right knowledge personified, but the picture thought Gandhi, was imaginary.[38] It did not mean that Krishna never lived but that his perfection was an imagined one and the idea of a perfect incarnation was an aftergrowth. The belief in incarnation was a testimony to man's lofty spiritual ambition. Man could not be at peace with himself till he became like God. The endeavour to reach this state was the supreme, ambition of a human being and it was the only ambition worth having. And this self-realization was, for Gandhi, the subject of all *Gita*. But the author of *Gita*. conceded Gandhi was not trying to establish this doctrine. His object to show the way to attain self-realization; the matchless remedy being renunciation of the fruits of action. This was the center round which the *Gita* was woven and around which devotion, knowledge and the rest revolved like planets.

The body had often been likened to a prison because wherever there was body, there was labour as no embodied being was exempt from it. The question then was how could the body be made into a temple of God? That is, how could one be free from action, and thus from the taint of sin? The *Gita* thought Gandhi had answered the question in decisively "By desireless action; by renouncing fruits of action, by dedicating all activities to Gods, i.e. by surrendering oneself to Him body and soul".[39]

Renunciation however did not mean that the renouncer did not get any fruits of his action. The *Gita* did not warrant such a meaning. Renunciation means the absence of hankering after fruit. As a matter of fact, he who renounced reaped a thousand fold. The renunciation demanded by the *Gita* was the acid test of faith. He who was ever brooding over result often lost nerve in the performance of his duty. He became impatient, gave vent to anger and then began to do unworthy things. He jumped from action to action never remaining faithful to any. He who brooded over results was like a man given to objects of senses, and like him he was ever distracted. He then said goodbye to all scruples. Everything became right in his estimation and he therefore resorted to means fair or foul to attain his end.

Thinking along these lines, Gandhi felt that if he had to enforce the central teaching of *Gita* in his own life, he was bound to follow Truth and Ahimsa. When there was no desire for fruit, there is no temptation for untruth or ahimsa. But he freely admitted that the Gita was not written to establish ahimsa.[40] It was an accepted and primary duty even before the age of *Gita*. The *Gita's* message was the renunciation of the fruit of action. This was clearly brought out as early as the second chapter. Accepting the complexity of the Gita's message, Gandhi went on to say

> "Nor is the Gita a collection of Do's and Dont's. What is lawful for one may be unlawful for another. What may be permissible at one time, or in one place, may not be so at another time, and in another place. Desire for fruit is the only universal prohibition. Desirelessness is obligatory."[41]

But renunciation or sannyasa of the Gita did not mean the cessation of all activity. The sannyasa of the Gita was a paradox: it meant "all work and yet no work". "Thus the author of the Gita." said Gandhi, by extending the meanings of words, has taught us to imitate him. Let it be granted, that according to the letter of the *Gita* its possible to say that warfare is consistent with renunciation of fruit. But after forty years' unremitting endeavour fully to enforce the teaching of the Gita in my own life, I have in all humility felt that perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect observance of ahimsa in every shape and form".[42] This is an amazing idea to arrive at from a text exhorting war.

Karmayoga and its Diverse Meaning

Hence, it can be seen that three great nationalists all interpreted the karmayoga of *Gita* in their own ways and arrived at three different interpretations and three different courses of action. Gandhi took the path of non-violence and led the country to freedom through it. However, neither he nor his followers could prevent the violence of partition and finally he himself met with a violent end. Sri Aurobindo left the national movement and went to Pondicherry declining even Tilak's requests in 1919 after his return from his long incarceration in Mandalay sent through one of his lieutenants, Joseph Baptista, to return to lead the nationalists. He wrote a long letter in reply declining the offer as he said he was busy in spiritual activity of great import in Pondicherry which he called his "cave of tapsya".[43] For him true karmayoga or desireless action could only be achieved after the consciousness had been properly prepared for it. As he explained:

> The ordinary life consists in work for personal aim and satisfaction of desire under some mental or moral control, touched sometimes by a mental ideal. The Gita's yoga consists in the offering of one's work as a sacrifice to the Divine, the conquest of desire, egoless and desireless action, bhakti for the Divine, an entering into the cosmic consciousness, the sense of unity with all creatures, oneness with the Divine.[44]

As for Tilak, he was released from the jail in Mandalay in June 1914 and once again plunged into action. He said that six years of separation from the people had not lessened his affection for then and that he had not forgotten the concept of swaraj. There had been a rift in the Congress and he tried to unite the two groups but failed.[45] He, then, built his own powerful separate organization the "Home Rule League" with swaraj as its goal. The government was again alarmed by Tilak's activities. In 1916, Tilak's sixtieth birthday was celebrated but the government, ironically, demanded a surety of Rs. 20,000 for his good behaviour of one year. His body gradually grew weaker. At this time, a journalist called Valentine Chirol visited India and charged him with being the leader of a violent revolution in India. Tilak claimed that this was an insult to him and asked for damages. He went to England to fight his case and stayed there for thirteen months. Althought he lost the suit, he befriended several leaders of the Labour Party and also intensified the Home Rule movement.[46] The Rowlat Act was promulgated and was opposed in India leading to the Jalianwala Bagh massacre. Tilak rushed back to India at once and exhorted his countrymen to continue the movement till their demands had been met. By this time, his health was poor but he undertook tours to awaken the people. In July 1920 his conditioned worsened and on the 1st of August, he passed away. He had truly lived a life as enjoined by the *Gita* the life of a Karmayogi.

Conclusion

The question arises why and how did the same concept of karmayoga lead to three different paths? The answer, perhaps, lies in the fact that our interpretations are based on our own life's experiences and the paths that we choose to take in the light of these. Or, to use the words of Sri Aurobindo,

> All action is determined by the effective state of our being, and the effective state of our being is determined by the state of our constant self seeing will and active consciousness and by its basis of kinetic movement. It is what we see and believe with our whole active nature ourselves to be and our relations with the world to mean, it is our faith, our sraddha, that makes us what we are.[47]

Hence, the tree great leaders of the national movement, all read, the *Gita*, were profoundly moved by it especially during their incarceration and inspired by it, chose such different paths from each other.

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Cultures of the Margin in Multilingual Societies: A Comparative Perspective

CHANDRA MOHAN

The history and literature of a country, in the current social and political scenario, remains incomplete if the country's aboriginal heritage and culture get ignored in its writing. A country's literary history would further miss its core, if the voices of its ethnic, tribal and minority writers remain unheard and unrecorded. This phenomenon is of great importance in multilingual and multicultural societies. The plea in favour of retaining the pluralist heritage consisting of diverse ethnic and tribal communities is beautifully expressed thus in the report of a tribal commission: "Every flower has the right to grow according to its own laws of growth;... to spread its own fragrance, to make up the cumulative beauty and splendor of the garden. I would not like to change my roses into lilies nor my lilies into roses. Nor do I want to sacrifice my lovely orchids of rhododendrons of the hills."[1]

The paper, in a comparative context, attempts to provide a glimpse of the vast and potential cultural and poetic import of tribal literatures which substantially add to the literary discourses in multilingual and pluralistic societies, India and Canada. According to available statistics, nearly 8% of the total population of India, and about 3% of Canada consist of the tribal or the native

Indians. In India the census lists 74 tribal languages. In Canada there are 53 indigenous languages spoken in more or less mutually intelligible dialects, major dialects spoken by the Cree, Stoneys, Innuits etc. Both the countries, India and Canada are committed to the concept of multiculturalism. In Canada it is enshrined as a historic bill which helps "to satisfy a long - standing yearning on the part of millions of citizens... whose origins can be traced to every part of the globe, to be recognized as equal partners in Canadian society."[2]

In India, this concept has come to people very naturally because of the prevalence of bilingual or multilingual situations that prevail at almost every place in the country. As a matter of fact, multiculturalism has been a part of Indian society in every phase of its history. There are not only many languages in the country, but some of them are distributed over large geographical areas. Yet there was a system through which communication was made possible and no linguistic area remained completely isolated from the other.[3] This diversity in linguistic scene witnessed by the distinguished comparatist Henry Remak on his visit to India made him remark: "Nowhere in the world is the present evolution of comparative literature as dynamic and constructive as in India."[4] This linguistic and cultural diversity gets reflected as an established way of life in both the countries. At present there 24 independent literary languages in India and Canada is a home to more than one hundred ethnic groups who speak 85 different languages.

The importance and vastness of tribal literature can be judged objectively in two ways: a) to study it as a body of literature consisting of diversified beliefs, myths and philosophies, especially of the elders of the community, b) the literature found in the rich oral tradition of story telling, discourses, songs on the various occasion of life carrying the bitter sweet memories and prayers to the Great Spirit. In the context of oral tradition it is further underlined as "the continuous flow of verbal interaction" that works as the fundamental reality of language. Placed in the oral literature of Canada's natives and India's tribals this consists of formal narrative, informal story telling, songs and prayers as well political discourses. In fact in both cases and also in the corpus of other tribal literatures there exists a vast and remarkably diversified body of oral narratives. Oral influences in contemporary Inuit literature is aptly described thus: "They (limits) made widespread use of both realistic and symbolic illustrations in connection with their oral literature, they had a variety of pictographic systems such as that called "story-knifing," which was used by little girls in Alaska for narration, and they quickly developed fixed hieroglyphic systems of recording to serve the generation which was caught between the two worlds, knowing that writing existed but not having access to anyone who could teach it."[5] In the case of literary production of native women, the importance of orality as textuality is of great relevance and it plays a key role as "a marker of female difference." It is illustrated thus: "Women form a speech community", we read, "with language skills and attitudes of our own, as well as those shared by the wider speech community." Gossip can be viewed positively as a specific type of women's language or genderlect, "a language of intimacy arising from the solidarity and identity of women as members of a social group with a pool of common experience."[6]

Each linguistic group has its own particular set that accords with its own religious and philosophical beliefs which make this body of literature unique and culture specific. The history of the native Indian's officially acknowledged contributions goes back to the eighteenth century in Canadian Literature. It is interesting to know that as back as in 1745. Samuel Johnson, the eminent English biographer, poet and critic published a "Greenland Ode," an Eskimo–language poem with an English translation (quoted in Sherbo 575). "This ode celebrates the birthday of King Christian of Denmark, and was the first Inuit poem to be available to the English-speaking world. In the two and half century since this poem appeared, more and far better Inuit poetry has been published."[7] During the British rule in India the general approach of the administration, according to Sitakant Mahapatra, "was of non-interference with the tribal world. This not only meant not interfering with their traditional life-styles, customs and manners but also a high degree of indifference towards the knowledge, and understanding of these systems."[8]

The massive literatures of the tribal societies are often embedded with a sense of pride for their own cultures. This is true of Indian and Canadian native writings. The themes of native identity and ethnonationalism are of great potential, as they engage our attention in the literary narrative of the above communities. Their songs such as the festival songs, marriage songs, ever-returning cycle, rites of propitiation, invocation songs, playing with words, the riddles etc. are the voices of the legendary ancestors sung through the voices of the children and grand children. The new voices echo meanings and bring meanings and fresh currents of human knowledge 'in the arid Western world.' One of the innumerable examples of cultural self-assertion and native identity is made in "Me" – a poem by an aboriginal Shawna Lynn Dunielle Panipekseesick, which goes as follows:

> You can judge me by the colour of my face
> You can judge me because I'm not one of your race
> You can strip me of my beliefs and my pride
> But there's a fire inside me that will never die.
> So, I'll tell you once again.
> I am damn proud to be an Indian.[9]

In a similar vein, a part of the Munda Song of the Santali tribe from Orissa, India, presents a concrete reality symbolized by the stones on the village street which are memorials to dead ancestors:

> Dreaming of you in bed
> I woke and took to the road.
> Stumbling on the stone
> I remembered my caste, my gotra
> And stood transfixed.[10]

Sitakant Mahapatra very appropriately cites the powerful and inimitable sense of identity which is further reinforced by the remarks of the eminent British poet and critic David Holbrook: "The songs and the illuminating comments on Oraon and Munda culture belong to a worldwide struggle among men to try to find a sense of their identity, not in mere 'nationalistic' terms but in terms of how, since they live in their symbolism, they can find particular meanings and forms of "authenticity" in their own lives, in their own place and time."[11]

Set against the demands of modernization, especially realising the ambivalent nature of the situation arising from the need to express through mother tongue rather than through an acquired tongue i.e. English, the research studies carried out in both cases reveal the fact which the native writers inevitably sense and realise from the outset that English is far from being the narrator's mother tongue or his language of first choice. For the native, wholeness is not available without largely surrendering claims of individuality in favour of claims of community living. That is why language in most native texts always strives towards a condition of community. That itself contributes to the de-colonizing process. An idea of what kind of loss the colonizing process represents here is given to us by Rita Joe's poem "I lost my talk":

> I lost my talk
> The talk you took away
> When I was a little girl
> At Shubenacadle school.
> You snatched it away
> I speak like you
> I think like you
> I create like you
> The scrambled ballad, about my word[12]

Almost in an identical situation this view of language with regard to the subject of the Dalit writings in India, the following poem by Arun Kamble, titled "Which Language Should I speak?" may be cited:

> Chewing trotters in the badlands
> my grand pa
> the permanent resident of my body
> the household of tradition heaped on his back hollers at me.
> "You whore-son, talk like we do.
> Talk, I tell you."
> Picking through the Vedas
> his top-knot well-oiled with ghee,
> my Brahmin teacher tells me,
> "You idiot, use the language correctly"
> Now I ask you
> Which language should I speak?[13]

These illustrations, as rightly pointed out,[14] highlight the issue relating to the distance between the dialect of the natives spoken at home and the refined speech of the middle class which charts the social space and divides the marginalised forms of popular speech and imperatives of the authoritative centres of language. The point may be further explained in the light of Bakhtin's dialogical principle that the word as a sign is an index of the cultural and social conflict. This point further underlines the "continuous flow of verbal interaction" as the fundamental reality of language.[15]

The oral literature of Canada's natives and India's tribals consists of formal narrative, informal story telling, songs and prayers as well as political discourses. Within Canada, the indigenous language families are concentrated in the West. Eight out of eleven languages are spoken in the British Columbia alone. The major dialects spoken are Cree, Black poot, Ojibwa, Odawa, Woods, Swampy, Northern, Dakota and Beaver. Again, the oral traditions of the indigenous people provide a fascinating literature. Myths and legends, folk tale and folk lore make an integral part of such narratives. Sometime the myths denoting god and goddesses, the wizards, magicians and enchanters are related to the lives of the heroes and the heroines of such stories. It is interesting to see that the myths are interwoven with the narratives of innocent fairy-tales. This not only provides internal histories of diverse native people within a specific cultural parameter, but more importantly they "carry with them messages and meanings that must not be misconstrued. In most instances, stories, prayers, songs, and all other forms of oral communication teach and reinforce a personal conduct and way of life which it is critically important to understand... The attitudes, values, and beliefs of respective peoples are more important than the fact that they engage in oral performances of stories, songs, courting rituals cultural contexts can this meaning be elucidated. It is the meaning of specific facets of Native oral records that maintains the integrity of the people's history."[16]

The old history tradition of the tribal literature, whether of Canada or India, no doubt contributes to very good poetry. This body of literature is full of visions, images, fine revelations concerning human beings' physical environment and spiritual nature. Sitakant Mahapatra's fine analysis presents a sample of the vast repertoire of the tribal oral tradition which has "vast variety and range of song-poems and tales." One such example, Kondh Meria song, "prayer to the goddess of sakti or energy, primordial essence of lye", is narrated thus:

O Goddess
Invest all knowledge & power
On this novice
O Kondagadbo and Bandimadio
Bless him, bless him.
Awaken the latent power
The power that is sharp and cutting
As the barba grass-blades.[17]

The theme and the content expressed here is quite akin to the Song of the Great Spirit by First Nations, Blackfoot, which is as follows:

Great Spirit,
Bless us all,
Man, woman and children
Sacred Medicine Bundle,
Help us to live a straight life
Sacred Medicine Pipe,
Bless us, also the rivers,
Mountains, prairies,
Animals and birds,
Mother Earth,
Provide for us
Until we die.[18]

It looks quite ironical that in spite of these valid and officially recognized statistics, the real status and recognition of tribal literature does not get its due place in multilingual societies. In a country like Canada which officially claims bilingualism and multiculturalism as the pride achievements of the country, the Canadian Encyclopedia (101.2, 1988, p. 725) classifies the original inhabitants of Canada, the native Indians and Inuit in the "ethnic" category. As a result of this paradoxical interpretation, Canada's first people and their literature are counted among the ethnic/ minority culture category and thus they denote the "us-them" colonial power structure more conspicuously. In the case of the tribal societies in India, the colonial practice during the British rule had almost remained identical. The tribal areas were marked as "underdeveloped tracts" for administrative purpose. Even the European anthropologists with their quest for the exotic, used the term "tribal" in a pejorative sense and called them a race of people in a primitive and barbarous condition, the aboriginal were described us "adivasi", "vanjati", "janjati" (dalits), meaning thereby generally the uncivilized lot who live in jungles.

The examples of the Canadian and Indian multilingual societies depict how the primitive tribes of the people add their rich mosaic of cultures to the mainstream literatures. In a big way, they strive towards the multicultural ideas as legitimate authors of written word and oral tradition of rhetorical speech making and story telling. This corpus of literary productions which becomes an integral part of any multilingual society need to be heard and expressed in the narrative in greater and stronger terms.

NOTES

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The New Indian Comparative Literature and Culture Studies

ANAND B. PATIL

> On the brink of the new millennium, as we look back over literary history and the recent past of comparative literature as an academic discipline, it seems timely to ask; what have we learned in Mario Valdes's words, about "Literature in the context of the culture it represents?" How will those lessons shape histories in the next millennium?
>
> Jan Walsh Hokensen, "Comparative Literature and the context" in CLC Web journal: Comparative Literature and Culture 2.4 (Dec. 2000)

In the beginning of the new millennium, comparatists witnessed a great divide between theory and text and struggled to keep "the discipline's emphasis on literary history at least visible on the horizon". However, the historians marked the "end of history" itself, and theorists wrote about the "end of theory". In 1970's the French poststructuralists declared "the death of the author". This terrible epidemic of demise in literati affected "comp Lit" in many ways.Sussan, Bassnett (1993:47) predicted at the turn of the century:

> "Today comparative literature in one sense is dead. The narrowness of the binary distinction, the unhelpfulness of

> the historical approach, the complacent shortsightedness of literature as civilizing force approach has all contributed to its demise"

Gayatri Chachravarti Spivak's *Death of a Discipline* presents the concept of merging CL with Area Study on the planetary level (2003). The reviewer of Bassnett's book, Joseph Pivato, has rightly pointed out how her critique from the European point of view "revolves around the traditional centers of the literary institutions of France, Germany, England and the United States. She does deal with the spread ofWestern Literature in the former colonies by the European powers, but she neglects the growing cultural diversity within these very self-centered western notions." Although she argues for reforms in the comparative study of literature, she does not seem to be aware of many changes that are taking place rapidly in several fields of study. Her perspectives seem to be dated. However, in case of India the 'belated' comparative literature has not yet struck deep roots, albeit it is spreading slowly to the remote regions with the spread of educational institutions.

On this background, I have divided my paper into three parts. The first one is dedicated to the analysis of the works done during the previous century. The second part scrutinizes the socio-politico-cultural complexities involved in its development and of the present position of the Comparative Indian Literature. The final one suggests new dimensions for its survival in the process of globalization; as regards the institutional support, the UGC has given top priority to it in its list of thrust areas and the fellowship projects. The NGOs such as K. K. Birla Foundation, Delhi and special chairs instituted in a few universities to foster comparative literature have been doing some contributions to its development in their own way. It is claimed that our culture itself is translational and diverse; but hardly these complex issues are theorized in the context of "Indian Literature". When one uses the term 'Comparative Indian Literature' in singular, it is difficult to locate it in the clusters of Indian languages with distinct traditions of their own. An Indian comparatist finds himself in, to use Vilas Sarang's metaphor, 'the pond' of his own regional language. How can he/she claim that his/her comparative literature is representative of the whole subcontinent? For example, an Indian comparatist writes a book "Albert Camus in India" but fails to present the picture of Camus's reception in the subcontinent in totality owing to the lack of the knowledge of more than two dozens of constitutionally recognized languages. Moreover, glittering complexities are insurmountable. This is one of the reasons as to why the survey of comparative Indian literature is bound to be conditioned not only by barriers of languages but also by the hurdles created by creed, caste, religion and region.

The following table will show this diversity reflected in research, which is at the crossroads today, with special reference to the M. Phil., Ph.D. and postdoctoral dissertations submitted by the Marathi speaking scholars to approximately 40 universities from 1938 to 2000:

Language	Submitted	Published
Marathi	50	12
Gujarati	01	00
Hindi	140	20
English	14	04
Kannada	01	00
Total	**206**	**36**

Approximately the number might have gone to 225 by this time. The foreign publisher published none of them, and indigenous publishers are hardly informed of the international winds of change in literature. The traditional cultural industry seems to be wary of comparisons. A few significant research works by Vasant Bapat (in Marathi), Bhalchandra Nemade, Vilas Sarang and Anand Patil (in English) are published through the financial assistance of the UGC. The UGC policy to exempt only such lecturers from the NET and SET exam that completes their Ph. D. research before 31 December 2000 gave rise to the mushroom growth of instant research works in thousands. Overall, such compulsions have helped duplication and plagiarism instead of encouraging the innovative works. Recently I returned the following Ph.D. for revisions. The titles are misnomers and the research merely the hotchpotch work:

1. A Critical Study of Taslima Nasrin's Literature translated into Marathi (Written in Marathi)
2. The Theme of Emancipation in three Afro-American Women Poets (In English)

On the contrary, I recommended Elma John's "The New Women in Ibsen and Shaw: A Feminist Perspective" submitted to the University of Kerala, 2002, for the awards of Ph.D. degree. These works speak volumes about the problematic of doing comparative literature in India. The first work was neither the translation study nor did it fit into the frame of a feminist study also. It lacked methodology and discipline of an ordinary research. To be brief, it was the mockery of research and misuse of grants and concessions. The second one belongs to the breed of American cultural contract sanctioned easily to the backward classes / castes for duplicating Afro-American models through Indian "Fulbright". It was one of the features of the Cold War and of the PL480 to wean away leftist resistant writers and appropriate them. Consequently, the comparative studies of Dalit and American Black panthers become more informative than resistant. There was mere compilation and not a variety of inter comparative research works in any sense. The last one in the above list demonstrates how our comparative feminist study can be completely Eurocentric. Here a problem arises: Can an oriental study competently and comparatively be conducted on the topic, "The New Women in Ibsen and Shaw?" Will this work be recognized as a good contribution to either feminist criticism or comparative literature in the West? It may not, because it compares "their" texts by using their theories without any Indian interventions.

Broadly speaking, Comparative Literature as an independent discipline has not yet come into existence in several states in India. Maharashtra is not an exception. Isolated individual works can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century. C.G. Bhate pleaded from London in the 1900's for developing comparativism in Marathi Literature. Vitthal Ramaji Shinde stayed in Britain to study religion comparatively. Panjabrao Shyamrao Deshmukh's Ph.D. dissertation titled "The Origin and Development of the Religion in Vedic Literature" was submitted to the Oxford University in 1926. He worked under the guidance of the Sanskrit Scholar Dr. A. B. Keith and with Keith's "Preface", it was published by the Oxford University in 1933. I translated it in Marathi in 2003, and released it as a part of his birth centenary celebrations. It can be asked by borrowing J. W. Mitchel's pertinent question: "Why comparisons are so odious?" Perhaps it was the politics of cultural hegemony that the indigenous elite literati did not recognize Deshmukh's monumental work. It is necessary to scrutinize the static and rigid socio-cultural frames in which a comparatist is placed. Indian Vedic Tradition defies analysis and hierarchies allow superficial harmless comparisons. There is a total lack of institutional support despite the priority given to it on paper by the UGC. The handbook of Curriculum has listed dozens of courses in comparative literature, but they are hardly taught any where except three or four university departments in India. Maharashtra cannot boast of any center of Comparative Literature.

Under such circumstances, it is necessary to take the stock of our achievements and map the unexplored territories by showing new awareness of the rigid socio-cultural frame of hierarchies in which the comparatist has to work with courage and commitment. It can be ironically said that internationally known Indian comparatists are outside India. We rushed to receive V.S. Naipaul, the Nobel Laureate in Delhi, albeit he usually ridicules Indians as "Mimic Men". Are we going to have a new category of "Indian Diasporic Comparative Literature?" Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak, Gauri Vishwanathan, Homi K. Bhabha, Madhav Prasad and a few other NRIs are great comparatists abroad. Amiya Dev (2000) has not included them in the galaxy of great Indian theorist-comparatists in his recent survey, which has appeared in the online journal of Comparative Literature and Culture. He has commented critically on the works of Guru Bhagat Singh, Jaidev, Aijaz Ahmed, K.M. George, Swapan Majumdar and Sisir Kumar Das. He concludes:

> Finally, let me assure you that, obviously, the problematics of unity and diversity are not unique to India. However, in keeping with my proposal that the situs of both theorists and theory is an important issue, I demonstrate here the application of the proposal. If I had discussed, for instance, Canadian diversity, it would have been from the outside, that is, from an Indian situs. I am not suggesting extreme relativism, but comparative literature has taught us not to take comparison literally and it also taught us that theory formation in literary history is not universally tenable. I am suggesting that we should first look at ourselves and try to understand our own situations as thoroughly as possible. Let us first give full shape to our own comparative literature and then we will formulate a comparative literature of diversity in general. (4)

Dev's humanistic position and theorizing of diversity in unity in India may not save the Comparative Indian Literature from sad demise. Are we ready for new CL now? The question demands the discussion of professional and institutional aspects of CL. As we know institutional chaos, it is better to discuss some of the professional realities. What we need today are the visionaries of "New" comparative Indian Literature and theorists of comparative culture studies. The application of Bassnett's above-cited observation to Comparative Indian Literature at present is needed. "The narrowness of binary distinction" strengthens our caste/class marked rigid hierarchy, which blur our comparative insights and obliterates politico-culturally wrong comparisons. The challenge for comparative Indian literature is the task of theorizing Indian culture in the global contexts today. Vilas Sarang's (2004) confessional series of articles titled "Jaat Vastav ani Lekhak" (The caste reality and writer) has, for the first time in Marathi, theorized the process of conditioning of a Marathi writer in the context of caste/ class location in reality. This is a surprising turn in his internationalist cosmopolitan position that he voiced half a decade ago in "On Confessions of a Marathi Writer" (World Literature Today: 67:309-3). It is an intra-colonial cultural paradox that a reference to "The subtly caste marked mire of Marathi literature" and "Frogs croaking at each other" was left out in its Marathi translation by A.N. Pednekar. Later he published two articles on "Jaat Vastav ani Lekhak" (The caste reality and writer), in the *Anushtubh Dipawali*, December 2004. According to him, the rigid caste hierarchy directly or indirectly dwarfs the Marathi writers. He has theorized this issue rather boldly by narrating his own experiences as a creative writer and translator recognized by the Penguin Publication. His classification of our writers in the steal frame of four varna and literati into four corresponding neo castiest distinct groups displays how a cultural comparative study leads us to the unpleasant realities of, in Gramci's terms, hegemonic "war of positions" and better intra cultural understanding. These complex realities, of which he was not aware at the early stage of his career but had suppressed them, have dawned upon him very late in his sixties. He has arrived at the conclusion that these complexities make much difference in healthy development of Marathi writer. From positive perspective it can be argued that the inclusiveness of the reality of castes and steel frame of thousands of sub-cultural groups and languages will lead up to a new approach designated as "Comparative Culture Studies" by North American Steven Totosy de Zepetnek in his book "Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application" (1998). If a distinct Indian School of Comparative Culture Studies is to be developed in the new millennium, we have to work now on an intellectual and institutional history of the discipline of Comparative Cultural Studies as well as the framework's application to varied areas of literature and culture.

Such minority structure of our whole literati holds together circles within circles, which display distinct anti-dialogic heterogeneous traits. They defy homogenization and do not recognize hierarchies imposed from outside. Each sub-culture/ caste group has its own hierarchies, codes and conventions, which cannot be easily located in terms of Homi K. Bhabha's deconstruction of international cultural hybridism. Historically, Indians define themselves in the contexts of the "Other" in their local subculture groups first. The multilingual situation here is far different from that in China. In terms of East-West power politics in Comparative Literature Studies China seems to have consciously adopted distinct policy. It is reflected in the Beijing International Conference of the International Comparative Literature Association and the projects of getting western comparative literature books translated into Chinese, to play a significant role in culture politics, described by Samuel Huntington as "marked by multipolar and multicivilizational strife" (see William H. Thornton 2000). In the post cold war thought culture has supplanted ideology. Thornton's following observations bring out the difference between the "cultural realism" in two countries:

> ....The term "cultural realism" has been applied specifically to Chinese cultural politics by Alastair Johnston (1995), who argues that a tradition of a realpolitik lies beneath China's cloak of Confucian- Mencian moderation. This inclines China to be much faster than most states to use force in territorial disputes ....Globalists tend to overlook the inertia of the bureaucratic and authoritarian tradition that traces to the Qin dynasty, and the isolationism that traces to the Ming (builders of the Great Wall). In this study, however, cultural realism is equally concerned with traditional and emerging relations between political cultures, e.g., the Chinese and

> Vietnamese. It is thus the perfect medium for "soft power" analysis. (1)
>
> ....Where cultural or civilizational friction reaches the proportions described by Huntington's *clash*; we can expect reactionary modernism to be the rule rather than the exception in developing countries. In India, for example, Hindu fundamentalism is less a threat to material modernization than to the secular state and whole democratic apparatus.(4)

"Reactionary modernism" in India is a condition of radical divorce between economic and technical modernization, on the one hand and political (liberal democratic) modernization on the other. The effects of privileging middle class economy are visible in our literature. Given the realities of the Third world cultural politics, strong central authority must first be established. In this respect, China's techno-cultural nationalism seems to have helped it to become a superpower. In our culture negative realism has to make a space for inclusive affirmative realism so that intra-cultural agonistic will be tempered by cultural dialogical. It has been pointed out that Bakhtin's dialogs kept the self intact. It is only by asserting one's own uniqueness that one can hope to engage a unique 'other' dialogically. The colonial history of our anti-dialogic education and peculiar socio-cultural devices seem to have stunted the healthy growth of comparative literature. Let us again juxtapose a few statements from the article, which appeared with the article of Dev, by Xiaoyi ZHOU and Q.S.TONG

> On the landscape of modern Chinese literary scholarship, comparative literature is perhaps one of the most versatile and active fields of study. As an academic discipline and a mode of intellectual inquiry and scholarly production, comparative literature was imported to China from the west via Japan in the early twentieth century ....*the translation of western work became national enterprise* (italics mine).....(2000,1)

On the contrary, comparative literature traveled to the Howrah Bridge and Gateway of India not only via roads from Paris to London but also from the World Trade Center in New York. The Europeans never colonized China. It is interesting to note the difference between the response as well as resistance to the Euro-American models. ZHOU and TONG observe:

> In Chinese comparative literature concerning Indian and Chinese literature and Russian and Chinese literature, it is noticeable that most of the scholarly attention is focused on how Chinese culture have been influenced by inspirations drawn from India and Russia, respectively and comparatively. In contrast, critical inquiries into the encounters between Chinese and European literature have been largely centered on China's influence on Europe, in particular on English-language literature (2000,3)

> The Chinese enthusiasm for developing a strong school of comparative literature in the 1990s is revealed by their "unfailing interest in quickly turning more influential theoretical publications into Chinese. Translation in China has been a national enterprise and has played an instrumental part in making of China's literary modernity" (2000, 4)

Thus comparative literature as a critical practice may be considered a product of romanticism, nationalism and pursuit of modernism. Today the crisis of CL registers a deeper level of crisis that is also the crisis of its "ideological and political foundation". Its conviction in the existence of universality of literary values is challenged on its own ground. Eurocentricism and its grand project of enlightenment is minutely deconstructed. The poststructuralists blotted out the center and unity of the text and literary history. There emerged the culture-shouldered theory to shake the hierarchical foundations of CL between text as Foucauldian authorless discursive construct and text as authorless cultural artifact that traditional history splintered. Roland Barthe's declarations of the "death of the author" and questioning of the very subjective foundations of the process of creative writing—the hierarchies upon which most of the methods in comparative literature depended—crumbled down like the sand castles. In fact, the major traditional nationalist trend of "influence and source studies" has gone out of fashion. The Bloomian psychological as well as author- based maps of misreading and anxieties of influence are of no more help in moving beyond cumulative, outworn, and mechanical catalogues of layers and types of influences. In post-structuralist era, dead authors are no more influential. Hokenson(2000) has meticulously pointed out various problems in contextualizing and resocializing CL by placing culture at the center. He argues:

> Culture, having moved from margin to center of literary study is in several respects the new vessel for the old wine of "Comparative authors" and "source and influences". Now recognizing that no culture is singular, that even within Europe, national cultures implicate and replicate aspects of one another endlessly, and that African , Middle Eastern and Asian cultures long ago threaded their way into the foundations of Europe, comparative study must come to grips with the need to pluralize its own methods of analyzing "culture" and "context" in order to construct literary histories.(3,4)

Taking a very optimistic view of the present situation, we have to revision the comparative literature studies under the dominant influence of globalization, electronic imperialism of English language and the concept of new comparative literary history. Yves Chevrel's formulae of the presence of X in Y country have become less effective today. The limitations of Charles Bernheimer's report on the state of CL in America and consequent publication of the book, *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism* (1988) edited by him are pointed out by new comparatists. The complaints about inclusiveness of women movements, minority and ethnic studies, insistence on the European canon, the nostalgia for past dominance of Europe lead to the pessimistic view that CL has nothing new to offer. However, new inclusive approaches and practical application of systems theory is likely to save CL from the politics of Bernheimer's colleagues and open new possibilities of examining multicultural topics, post colonialism, border writing, peripheriality, life writing etc. Under such circumstances, I prefer a pragmatic approach by accepting extreme pluralism in India as an opportunity to counteract neocolonial artificiality and isolationist monologism.

Since the cultural upheavals such as Mosque-Mandir clash and Godhra carnage there has been a transformation in the way as to how meaning of culture has been reconsidered. In order to understand what is happening, we have to explore the implications of a rethinking of the meaning of culture, from a hierarchical system of classification to a contested space. For example the rise of new literatures branded as dalit, rural, adivasi etc. the idea that our "Indian" identities are both well defined and clearly visible has been under attack throughout the postcolonial period. The salient features of the postcolonial criticism have not yet entered our comparative literature. Too much emphasis on literariness, which prevailed in the second half of the last century, was challenged by postcolonial heterogeneity of "new literatures" mentioned above. It is one of the reasons of the crisis in comparative literature. The dalit, gramin (rural), tribal etc, literary texts defy hierarchization and elitism hidden behind modernism. They treat text as "a communal document". It is a kind of intra-anticolonialism, which confirms how comparisons are odious in our literati. The tradition of aesthetics of protest from Dnyaneshwar to dalit writers demonstrates how hierarchies have shaped the sprit of Marathi literature in terms of caste, creeds and regions. The Vedic tradition of discouraging analysis and comparison continues in different disguises. Perhaps this is one of the reasons of the weak development of CL in India. Will these perspectives change as cultural interaction on the global scale grows? This leads us to rethink of the nature and scope of New Comparative Indian Literature. The horizons of literary research and traditional concepts also must expand. For example, it is interesting to study the impact of globalization and the new media on the notion of world literature. The traditional concepts included mostly Euro-American classics in its syllabi. Now it is never static and only Eurocentric phenomenon or occidentation of culture. The mediation and intensification of literary relations is rapidly growing due to internationalization of social, political, and economic processes. The role and function of literary institutions has been undergoing a sea change. For instance, the comparative study of the impact of media on illiterate population in India and Africa demands a change in methods of comparison in the global literary culture. Such a problematic of the development of electronic media and the culture of information in India and the traditional tribal oral culture in regional settings needs to be studied in new contexts. The new laws are being framed for control and censorship of all kinds of media. The monopoly of media giants and its implications in India have placed us on the horns of dilemma. Will they preserve our cultural diversity in unity or destroy it. The deaths of not only authors and readers but also of several Indian languages are now being predicted by culturalists. On one side scholars are searching Indian literary cultures in history. Such reconstruction are undertaken by Sheldon Pollock

(2005). On the other side, comparatists have taken into consideration toto differences, desktop publication, online journals and cross disciplinary links in the electronic age. The changing patterns of literary intercrossing offer broad understanding of the interactions. They illuminate the cultural hegemony of mainstream literature. New comparative studies should constitute a subversion of and challenge to the uniform ideology derived from this mainstream literature and processes.

Glaudio Gullien had explained the challenge of CL at the turn in the last decade of the 20th century. However, this constant intellectual challenge keeps the discipline ever innovative and changing. Neither too optimistic nor too pessimistic view of the present developments can help us to find a way out. A golden mean can be struck by pragmatic acceptance of extreme pluralism as an opportunity to check artificiality. The international information may pave new paths for heterological approaches and innovative methodologies for cultural explorations. I take my point of departure that until the beginning of new millennium comparative Indian literature has remained Euro-Americacentric. But we have to return to our past to trace how Indian literature studies and the arts of "chikista" (interpretation) have been comparative since their inception. The knowledge of foreign languages is an essential factor in this field. Comparative Literature has remained always suspicious of hierarchical thinking deeply rooted in our cultural tradition. But the new encounters with other fields of knowledge are increasing in number and a kind of new interdependence is necessary in the present process of globalization. New technology leaves no room for xenophobia and discriminations based on color and caste. In research, line of division and focus on the kinds of cultural contacts is necessary for understanding of processes of interrelations and interactions. It is claimed that the objective of comparative literature is a search for universals. But the resistant aesthetics raises the pertinent question: whose universals? Limitations of overtextualization have already become apparent and now the emphasis lies on the reception by the audience. There is "something else" than the text/ context dichotomy. That "something else" may include the systematic and empirical approach to literature and culture popularized by Steven Totosy de Zepetnek. The recent comparative studies of literature and films have given a convincing demonstration of the theory and practice.

"The comparative imagination" facilitates cross-cultural and interdisciplinary study of literature and culture. Comparative perspective gives good opportunity for evaluating how history can contribute to modern knowledge. Inclusiveness and plurality are the watchwords of globalization. The same object becomes more innovative in culture study than CL because it includes many aspects and methods that are not borrowed as those in the CL. Cultural studies have acquired more influential intellectual and institutional standing. The merger of the two is the need of the time. This new approach has been designated as "Comparative Cultural Studies". CL has contributed much to the literary studies; now it can offer much to the cultural studies. Steven Totosy has suggested the following full-fledged framework containing three areas of theoretical content :

1. To study literature (text/ and/or literary system) with and in the context of culture and the discipline of cultural studies;
2. In cultural study itself to study literature with borrowed elements (theories and methods) from comparative literature and
3. To study culture and its composite parts and aspects in the mode of the proposed "comparative cultural studies" approach instead of the currently reigning single-language approach dealing with a topic with regard to its nature and problematics in one culture only. (1)

This framework might disturb the place of privileged literature in the Hindu culture hierarchy. It is a challenge for a comparatist in a more static and orthodox society to "pluralize and parallelize the study of culture without hierarchization". Culture has now become such a challenging concept in the secular democratic republic of India that it should be brought to the centre of comparativism. The importance of 'cultural turn' displayed the recognition of the culture as foundationally new. The two camps of culturalists and materialists have emerged out of this debate. The supporters of the cultural turn stress that the "Social sciences should take culture seriously". According to Mark J. Smith, "Cultural meanings are tacitly involved in the process of knowledge construction" further he points out:

There had not been just a turn to culture. Sometimes much more significant had investigation was needed. This meant that we had to acknowledge that approaches to culture happened-culture was being understood in very different ways. It struck me that some further had variety. It was not so much a cultural turn as a cultural swivel straight away. I realized that one discipline alone could not provide the range of tools to answer this question (2)

For a long time now, students of CL in India have needed a good up-to date introduction to the discipline, and its cultural turn. We need a synthetic history of comparative Indian Literature. Curiously, apart from K.M. George's misnomers, short survey, and occasional articles or brief descriptions of comparative regional or national Indian Literatures in different languages within the national borders are available in fragmented forms. They offer a partial and limited view of the history of underdeveloped discipline. A compendious bibliography of Indian Comparative Literature also needs to be complied. There are supplementary types of material that can be used for compile both the Indian as well as international history of CL. For instance, the Reports of Conferences, auto memoirs, profiles of the institutions etc provide valuable sources for such histories. There are a few articles, which deal with marginal, minor or peripheral literatures, cultures in India such as the dalit and adivasi. Overall, however, the general tone of the articles emanates from a national approach to literatures and cultures as popularized by the Central Sahitya Akademi, Delhi and the notion that in Indian subcontinent each literature and culture becomes "regional" is untouched and implicitly rejected. In other words, there is an explicit hierarchy in this approach. The CL based on the premises of national literatures cannot be totally divorced from their national bases. However, it should take into account the never developments of culture studies, multiculturalism, postcolonialism or any such. Such a national base of CL, in principle, represents a new entrapment in the national paradigm. This is the problem of national self-referentiality, as revealed in the complex process of saffronization of Indian culture and literature during the rule of NDA led BJP

Government at the Center, within the scholarship of Comparative Indian Literature. For example, Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan version of English Primer and school prayer are introduced in thousands of VHP run schools in the BJP ruled Jharkhand. The English alphabets are taught as follows: A for Arjun, B for Brahma, C for Cow, and D for Dhruva. 'Being run for the past many years by friends of Tribal Society and other front organizations of the RSS from the direct grant by the Union HRD ministry , the communal curriculum and content of these schools have come to light in a report by four member inquiry committee of the HRD Ministry'. (Times of India, 23 April 2005) This Hindustan agenda was intended to counter the Christian missionaries and Muslim Moulavi's proselytizing activities. Thus, the literati in multi ethnic society in Indian subcontinent are always placed on the horns of dilemma.

One of the most contentious issues in comparative Indian literature is the comparative study of "other" literatures and cultures. There is much discussion with specific reference to East and West in comparative literature. The still dominant aspect of the national paradigm and its position with regard to CL and its claim of inclusion is the most sidelined issue in the politics of CL. Not only for a Western comparatist but also for an Indian one the inclusion of the other is problematic at best. In this context it is the "how and not the "what" that determines the scholarship. The occidental can study the oriental with the help of reliable oriental. The argument that the postcolonial base of power disqualifies an occidental to study the oriental, or a non- dalit to study the dalit becomes a tool to harm if implemented. I fully agree with the comparatists who have pointed out that western humanities and CL in particular "Included" the other from its own Eurocentric locus. Such claims of inclusion are an unsuccessfully disguised attempt to "Universalize" humanity as expressed in literature. It is rather a persistent dilemma in Indian culture regarding the inclusion of caste-based culture groups from the upper caste-centric point of view and power. The only solution is to find ways and means of comparative mediation for cultural understanding and dialogue. Cultural study emphasizes context and opposes text-centered analysis. It emerged as a reaction to elitist notions of culture and meaning which were prevalent in literary studies also. It was meant to understand what it felt like to be alive at a time and place through the interpretation of cultural texts. Later its framework evolved into reception or audience studies in 1980s in Europe. The charge of over contextualization leads in turn to the analysis of the network of texts and contexts. In a way, this is the strong reaction to literary high modernism. The controversy over the significance of textual analysis is unending.

Under such circumstances, a new kind of comparative cultural literacy for democratic governance and peaceful coexistence would be an interesting innovation. The foregoing discussion has demonstrated that a large amount of work produced in cultural studies in English is quite different from what we have in India written about traditional "culture". The theorists evolve a set of new principles for the analysis of comparative literature and culture. Totosy has suggested a framework of comparative cultural studies based on 10 principles (6-7). Let us summarize them and finally find new paths for the better future of Indian comparative culture studies.

1. In this contextual approach, 'culture is defined as all human activity resulting in artistic production'. The attention to the "How" and process is its constructive feature. The act of comparison does not imply any preconceived hierarchy. In this way the method is crucial in it.
2. Its aim is 'to move an dialogue between cultures, languages, literatures and disciplines'. Comparative cultural studies offer an antidote to the built-in 'notions of exclusion and self referentiality of single culture study and there result of rightly defined disciplinary boundaries'.
3. The culturalists / comparatists must acquire 'in-depth grounding in more than one language and culture as well as other discipline'. This may pose intellectual and administrative problems, which can be solved by allowing 'parallelism in intellectual approach, institutional structure and administrative practice'.
4. Its focused lies on studying culture in its parts (Literature, Arts, Films, the publishing Industry) and as a whole in relation to other forms of human expression and activity (History, Sociology etc). It has its own problems of nomenclature, designation, recognition and institutional power.

5. The special focus on English as a means of global communication and access to information should not be taken as Euro-American-centricity. Its use in comparative culture studies should not represent any form of colonialism.
6. Its methodological focus should be on evidence based research and analysis.
7. It insists on methodology in interdisciplinary study: intra-disciplinary (within humanities), multi-disciplinary (employing any other discipline), and pluri-disciplinary (by team-work-participants from several disciplines).
8. It exhibits the contemporary paradox of globalization verses localization. It is promoted as 'Global, inclusive and multi-disciplinary framework in an inter- and supra-national humanities'.
9. Its practioners claim the vocational commitment to the in-depth knowledge of several cultures as basic parameters.
10. It is deeply concerned with recent marginalization and social irrelevance of the humanities, politics of scholarship and academe and troubled 'intellectual and institutional situational situation of the humanities in general'.

Finally Totosy concludes his article with his lengthy definition of comparative culture studies as follows:

> CCS is the field of study where selected tenets of the discipline of CL are merged with selected tenets of the field of cultural studies meaning that the study of culture and culture products – including but not restricted to literature, communication, media, art etc is performed in a contextual and relational construction and with a plurality of methods and approaches, interdisciplinary, and, if and when required, including team work. In CCS it is the processes of communicative action (s) in culture and the how of these processes that constitute the main objectives of research and study. However, CCS doesn't exclude textual analysis proper or other established fields of study. In CCS, ideally, the framework of and methodologies available in the systemic and empirical study of culture are favored (6)

Before we conclude let us ask, is there a future for comparative literature? The current writings influenced by globalization demonstrate that there may be a future, under specific Indian conditions. The next question is : will our comparatists make any changes as described by the designation "New" CL. Are they open to changes? The answers to these questions are still uncertain. Yet the rich multicultural heritage of India exhibits inherent potential for the healthy growth of 'New' cultural comparativism in the process of globalization.

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Kanchana Seetha – Subversion of Theme, Context, Perspective, Location, Mythology : The Adaptation of Literature to Cinema

VASANTI SANKARANARAYANAN

Film is closely associated with literature; many short stories, novels and dramas have been made into films. Discussions are always held on whether the film has done justice to the original text. The traditional view of doing justice to the original text hinged on the fidelity of the film to the text. In fact, the fidelity to the original text outweighed all other criteria of evaluation. Individuality or originality in adaptation was not deemed as a virtue. So, the film was not evaluated independently, but only in relation to the original text. Gradually, this view of adaptation changed and more and more filmmakers are taking liberties with the literary text. Two good examples of free adaptation of literature to cinema are Akira Kurosawa's "Throne of Blood" (Macbeth) and "Ran" (King Lear). Kurosawa has proven that the original can be enhanced and embellished through free adaptation.

Both literature and film are dependent on a text. But, the nature of these texts are very different. Literature is primarily a verbal medium, whereas film is a visual and audio medium. Because of this basic difference, the structure of the literary text and film text has to be different. The text of the film consists of many elements such as visuals, dialogue, music and other sounds; they are put together through montage or editing; camera work and processing plays a very important part in the formation of a film. While literature goes into the sphere of technology only at the publishing or marketing stage and not at the creative stage, film uses technology from the word "go"; the creativity of the film is based not only on the script, but also on camerawork, editing, processing etc. The only structural resemblance it has with literature is at the script stage, where the written word plays an important part. But, in as much as it has to anticipate the technological aspects of visuals and sounds being actualized and incorporated, the script (or the film text) takes a very different form from the literary text.

Besides, we also face the question whether in film the script alone can be called the film text. The script in a film is just an outline, and not a finished product. The film itself is the final product, like a book is the final product, the literary text. So, it would be inappropriate to view the film script as the film text. A film when it is based on an existing literary text, may choose to show the literary text in its entirety or show an interpretation of the literary text using the text as just a reference point. It is the latter kind of films which have to find suitable ways "adapting" a literary text into a film text. The points of departure in a film text from a literary text are many - plot, structure, technique, presentation, context and language. Film at that stage creates its own text and its own identity. With the emergence of the new text, comparison with the original text becomes a study in itself. In addition, the film text also becomes a subject for independent study without reference to the literary text. Both studies are valid and interesting.

This paper intends to examine *Kanchana Seetha* the film and the film text of late Aravindan on its own and in comparison with the two literary texts, *Kanchana Seetha*, the Malayalam play by late Sree C.N. Sreekantan Nair and the text of the original epic, *Ramayana*, especially the *Uttara Ramayana* by Bhavabhuti.

All the three texts deal with the same theme; the *Uttara Ramayana*, what happened after Rama killed Ravana and ascended the throne of Ayodhya. A pregnant Sita has been banished to the forest on the accusations of a washerman maligning her chastity. Twelve years have passed. Rama is on the verge of performing an *Aswamedha Yagya* (horse sacrifice) to declare to the whole world his supremacy over other kings. In order to perform the *Yagya*, the wife of the performer of the *Yagya* has to be present. Rama is not willing to call Sita back. So, after much debate, the figure of Sita, wrought in metal is placed next to him symbolising Sita. The events which follow form the text of the play of Sreekantan Nair and the film of Aravindan.

Sreekantan Nair made some subtle changes in the text of Bhavabhuti; Bharata and Urmila oppose Rama's decision not to recall Sita. Bharata even refuses to participate in the *Yagya*. But, Rama is adamant. His theory of "a king's duty" is very poignantly etched out. A king has to be above emotions; a king has to carry out the will of the people even it causes him great emotional sorrow. Sreekantan Nair views this concept of "*rajadharama*" imposed on the rulers as an attempt of the Brahmins to gain supremacy over the Kshatriyas (Rulers). He sees it as an ascendancy of Brahminism. He also interprets the killing of Sambuka as an act of Brahminism establishing its might over other castes and denying acts such as *Tapas* (penance) to people of other castes. A lot of weightage is given to gender distinctions and the injustices meted out to women. But, his Sita protests only at the last moment, when Rama asks her to publicly proclaim a second time, her chastity. There are enough hints in the play to show that not only the washerman, but Rama himself suspected Sita of being unfaithful to him. In any case, he has changed from the romantic hero of the earlier days who mourned the loss of his wife and fought a war to recover her. He is more interested in perpetuating his own clan's good name. Sita becomes secondary. With her being banished into the forest, the patriarchal instincts gain dominance over the human instincts.

Aravindan's film also reflects all the major concerns initiated by Sreekantan Nair in his play. However, the priorities of the film are very different from that of the play; so, the technique of presentation also undergoes a change. Sreekantan Nair's text becomes only a reference point. The points of departure are subtle and therefore this examination is valid. In the final analysis, it even becomes an examination of the potential of a film text as opposed to a literary text, in this case a theatre piece.

The first aspect that comes up for discussion is the plot, the story or the theme. *Ramayana* is the story of Rama, the prince, a scion of the Ikshwaku dynasty (an Aryan dynasty) from Ayodhya (an imaginary city lying in the Northern part of the present India). There is no doubt in anyone's mind about the identity of the hero, either in the original epic or Sreekantan Nair's play. Or rather, it is one of the givens. The epic calls itself the story of Rama; C.N. calls his piece *Kanchana Seetha*, but, it is still about Rama, an Aryan king whose exile from his own kingdon takes him to the Southern part of the continent. Aravindan's hero in the film, Kanchana Seetha, who is also Rama, is however, not an Aryan prince. He is a tribal chieftain, from the Godavari delta (the present Andhra Pradesh). He hails from the "Ramachenchu" tribe of Godavari delta. The Rama of Ramayana and Kanchanaseeta, the two literary texts, is not a part of the actual history; he is a mythical figure, a fictional figure. But, Aravindan gives his hero, Rama, a historical validity and credibility. He becomes a descendant, or representative of known tribal history. He belongs to an indigenous tribe and not to the settlers of the land, the Aryans. So, in one stroke, Aravindan changes the identity of the hero, from a mythical figure to a historical figure; from an Aryan to a Dravidian.

What is the significance of this assumption? The story of Ramayana itself moves from the realm of divinity to humanity. The idea that Rama is one of the incarnations of Vishnu, the preserver, is given some validation in the two literary texts. So, even as the story of Rama is narrated, his character and actions are given a "divine" and therefore unquestionable purpose. But, when Rama, in "Kanchana Seetha" (the film) is shorn of this divinity and taken out of the "divine context", he becomes more human, actual and vulnerable. Discussion of his actions, deeds and thought processes are human and more debatable. The second identity, that of a tribal chieftain, gives Rama's story an indigenous origin; it becomes the story of the original inhabitants of the place; it becomes a part of a history which has not been given enough importance or properly examined. Thus, Kanchana Seetha, the film, becomes a part of the discourse of the history of the indigenous people of India.

In order to give credence to his approach, Aravindan uses, people belonging to the Rama Chenchu tribe to act as his protagonists, Rama, Lakshmana and Bharata. These are non-actors and the idea of using non-actors, also gives a different texture to the film. The actors who have been cast in the roles of protagonists are very different in their looks from the popular concepts of heroes, especially mythical heroes. The commercial films and TV serials have depicted the epic heroes in a particular fashion. They are fair and handsome in an Aryan way. But, Aravindan's heroes are dark in colour and they do not fit in with the concept of"handsomeness" revealed through the earlier films and paintings such as Ravi Varma's. They are swarthy, stocky, with pock marks on their faces. Even in appearance, they are very tribal, and any popular notion of good looks has to be completely rejected. Thus, the visual presentation itself questions the Aryan identity of the epic heroes.

The second major change is in the depiction of "Seetha", the heroine of the epic. In the film Seetha has been given no specific form. She is imagined as "Nature" itself. In C.N.'s literary text, Valmiki says after Seetha disappears into the Earth, "There is no death for Seetha; Seetha is nature". But, this is only a concept. There is no other hint in the play connecting Seetha to nature and commenting on her immortality or eternity. But, Aravindan takes this as a reference point and elaborates it in his film. There is no actress depicting Seetha. For that would be an act of giving form to Seetha. Instead, Seetha is "absent". But, Aravindan does not stop by merely making Seetha absent. He gives his absent Seetha a presence. Seetha is visualised as Nature and her presence is indicated and felt through movements of nature, trees, leaves, wind and air. It is normally very difficult to portray "absence" in films. Aravindan solves this problem by giving the absence a presence. By depicting Seetha as Nature, she is elevated from one woman to all women or the Eternal Woman. The concept takes us back to the origins of the universe as Energy and Matter. Matter here is represented by Nature, and Energy through Men. By giving an eternal quality to Seetha, the woman, is Aravindan changing the whole perspective of Ramayana? Who is the real protagonist of this immortal story? Rama or Seetha or both. In any case, as the film is titled "Kanchana Seetha", it should give us an idea as to who the real protagonist is.

This throws open another area of debate. Why is the protagonist so patently absent from the narration? One could talk of the marginalistation of women from any story or history that is told and written. She is absent from spheres of decision in real life and from narration in the sphere of literature and art. She is only a tool, a mere object or a character that is part of a story or a scheme. She lends herself to the narration of a story, the creation of a history, but her role is often forgotten. But, in Aravindan's *Kanchana Seetha*, she is the observer, the mediator, the silent reminder of the need to avoid conflict and confusion. She is the personification of nurturing and caring. In the original *Ramayana*, she is the cause of the conflict or the war, but in Aravindan's film she is the silent voice which reminds others of the futility of conflict. By absenting herself from the scene of action, she gets a better presence; she is etched in the memory of everyone. Again, by being formless in a medium which gives prominence to form, she becomes the enigma, the future possibility of a technique in this medium.

In the film, silence plays an important part. Silence is not a device used as a punctuation between sounds, dialogues or music. Silence is the quality or main technique of the film. It could very well be a reminder of the silent era of the film medium when all the visual techniques were fully developed. It reminds us of the meditative and reflexive qualities of silence which can act as a source of solace and consolation in a noisy world. But, the film is not completely devoid of sound. It takes into consideration the advent of sound in films and uses sounds, not just the dialogue, but natural sounds and music. At the same time, it also experiments on the quality of silence, or the place of silence in film. Silence is not explored as absence of sound, but as a quality of sound, as an attribute of sound. Silence is also used to accentuate the poignancy of visuals and situations. In fact, the quality of silence that permeates this film is a separate subject for discussion as a device, technique and wholesome quality in the medium of film. This is the most important point of departure from the epic as well as the modem drama. Sreekantan Nair's drama is noted for its eloquence in speech and argument. All arguments are raised, all perspectives are explored through words, which have to be pronounced or spoken. There is no question of silence, only eloquence. But, Aravindan's film by stressing on the quality of silence takes its final departure from the literary work.

It also underscores the basic quality of film - visuals with or without sound. It also insists on a demarcation between the two forms - Film and Literature. Film is possible without words, without verbal narration, without the use of sound. Literature is based on words, verbal narration which precludes the use of sound and speech. So, this film becomes an experiment in defining the logic of the medium of film, the possibility of film having an independent existence unrelated to literary texts. As such, it should be considered as a document which explores the possibility of film having a clearly independent existence other than literary existence. It also underscores the difference between a literary text and a film text.

The geography of the location of the film has authenticity. The banks of Godavari provide the backdrop for the story. However, other locations such as Ayodhya, the forest etc. are all shown through the same location; the kingdom of the plains and the kingdom of the forests merge and become one. The merging point is the river, the flowing river, which is the best symbol of life and its ongoing quality. Caves and mud huts replace the palaces and townhouses. Staying in the present, the film goes back in time, to give the story a primeval and archetypal quality; minimalisation in props and sets lends itself to abstraction and stylisation and gives credence to the primeval quality of the landscape. Again, technology which is a fact of modern life is used to capture the untouched quality of a primeval past. The people who were associated with the production of this film still talk of how Aravindan waited for a misty morning to have the "perfect" final shots for the finale of the film. Would he, or could he have created that atmosphere through trick shots or special effects using modern technology? The question remains open and offers a subject for debate.

Aravindan was probably not a "feminist" in the sense the term is used with all its modern connotations. But, his film offers a great deal of thought to new feminist views. How can women protest against the injustices done to them ? One way would be to protest vociferously using the medium of words, through literature, speeches etc. But, there is another way, maybe a more feminine way, (without losing one's femininity), by withdrawing, by absenting, by taking on the roles of mediators, negotiators, observers and commentators. It may take more time to make one's views felt or known. However, it could be more lasting than agit-prop. Also, it is offering a real alternative to the competition, aggression, power play and war mongering which are all implicit in the patriarchy or dominance it is opposing. Women can oppose patriarchy; but, after gaining freedom if they themselves become patriarchal, feminism would not be offering a real alternative. In the final analysis. Feminism wants to protest against patriarchy, not men. Men have to be made true partners in life. They have to become aware of the physical and emotional needs of women. They have to treat women with respect, love and dignity. So, while feminism cannot allow oppression or domination by men, it can offer to women and men a better way of living in peace and harmony. *Kanchana Seetha* has germs of this philosophy and can be looked at from that ideological point of view also.

Another heartening feature of this film, is its own culture specificity. It has not given into "universalisation", Peter Brooks style. It stands very much within the milieu and culture from which it has sprung. It only offers a new insight or new interpretation to an old myth or epic. But, the source of inspiration is not an outside source. It goes back to a culture which is indigenous and specific and gives a new validity to the old myth. Therefore, it can be considered a new and experimental approach in Indian filmmaking. Film is a western invention, but as in the case of *Kanchana Seetha*, it has been integrated into a value system and aesthetics which are very Indian. It qualifies to be treated as an example of a specific "Indian Film Aesthetics".

SPACE

“Knowing One’s Place”: An Essay on Toponymic Identities

EUGENE EOYANG

> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
>
> –William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, v.i.

How we define ourselves is often related to how we name the places where we dwell. It is not only the poet’s imagination that conflates “a local habitation and a name” in any designation of identity. Sometimes a person is named for a place, and sometimes a place is named for a person, and it is not uncommon that often the names of person and place are, coincidentally, the same. In Shakespeare’s history plays, the names of characters are a virtual geography of the landscape of England: Warrick, Gloucester, Albany, York, Westmoreland, Cumberland, Worcester, Glendower, Canterbury, Exeter, Bedford, etc. These are nominalistic metonymies, where one’s origins or one’s domains, define one’s identity, like “Tex” in American English. In Japanese, Yamaguchi designates both a clan and a city (in southern Honshu). Sometimes the “local habitation” and the “name” are one and the same.

The origins of place-names, despite some general similarities, vary, either within one culture or across cultures: topographic features of the land figure prominently in many names; allusions to human institutions, cults, and centers led to some; and commemorations of individuals prompted others. Onomastics – the study of names – when directed at the class of names called "toponyms" – the names of places – may provide a semantic archaeology, a cultural etymology, revealing basic differences in values and concepts of identity.[1] This data is crucial to the study of anthropological linguistics, which combines an interest in language and an interest in culture, and in language as a reflection of culture.[2] What follows is a preliminary attempt to discern if there are any patterns, across history or across cultures, that might reflect different historical or cultural emphases or tendencies.

First, however, we need to recognize non-universalist attitudes toward "place", exemplified by the phrase, "knowing one's place". For it is in the contrasting attitudes towards this intelligence, of "knowing one's place", that one finds fertile ground for cross-cultural speculation. The phrase "knowing one's place" is one of those designations that, despite its straightforwardness, are, curiously, not culturally neutral. In hierarchical societies, "knowing one's place" is a commendable acknowledgement of one's status in society, of one's situatedness in the grander scheme of things, reflecting a humility towards one's own insignificance. To "know one's place" is to contextualize oneself in the world. In egalitarian societies, however, the phrase "knowing one's place" is a self-inflicted oppression, a reinforcement of a noxious, perhaps obnoxious reflection of prejudice, snobbery, and condescension. Someone who commends others for "knowing their place" is, from the egalitarian point of view, hardly admirable, because the phrase assumes an unearned superiority on the part of the speaker. Being satisfied that someone "knows his or her place" is, in more than one sense, a put-down, a relegation of an individual to a pre-conceived and static situation. For the egalitarians dedicated to the notion of freedom, physical as well as political, "knowing one's place" is to tie oneself down to one place and to relegate oneself to a locality.[3] The difference between the two attitudes marks the difference between situatedness as a source of strength, and fixedness as a reflection of reprehensible provinciality.

I think it is possible to read the place-names of the world, and through them – if we apply a certain deconstructive ingenuity – to discern not only differences toward the individual and his relation to the land, but also the historical shifts between Old World and New World onomastic practices. In what follows, I am making no blanket assertions about cultural practices in toponymic designations: exceptions to the rule can always be cited. However, it is fairly clear that different norms prevail in different cultures, and it is these norms that I wish to compare.

Topographic derivations

Traditional cultures generally have place-names that are either features of the local landscape or commemorative of luminaries, human or divine. Local topography is reflected in such toponyms as, from Chinese: Shanghai ("On the Ocean" – definitively *not* "Above the Water" as some mistranslations claim); Anyang ("peaceful light"); Hunan ("south of the lake"), Hubei ("north of the lake"), Pingxiang ("duckweed countryside"); Hai-k'ou [Haikou] ("mouth of the sea"); from Japanese: Nagano ("long field"); Hiroshima ("broad island"); Chiba ("thousand leaves"), Yokohama ("coast-shore"), Obazaki ("hill, promontory").[4] In India, Kerala would be a topographic toponym, since its name drives from Tamil *keralem*, meaning "land of coconuts".[5] There are even bilingual markers of the terrain, as in "Malabar Coast", which derives from a combination of the Tamil word *malay*, meaning "mountain", and the Iranian word, "barr," meaning "continent".

Commemorative place-names honoring divinities appear to be the norm in India, and would include: Hyderabad, meaning "lion town", commemorating Ali, son-in-law of Muhammed, founder of Islam (the name would make Hyderabad onomatically cognate with Singapore, which means "castle of lions" in Sanskrit)[6]; Chandernagor, which, in Hindi, evidently means "moon town," referring presumably to a moon cult once popular on the site; Chandrapur in west India seems to have a similar etymology ("moon town") – although it is not clear whether the same or different moon cults are involved. This association with the moon associates Chandrapur and Chandernagor with the biblical city of Jericho, its name deriving from the ancient Hebrew word, *yaréakh*, meaning "moon," and so relates to an ancient moon cult once practiced there. Chandigarh, in northern India, seems to honor the Hindi goddess, *Chandi.* Bombay/Mumbai appears to derive from *Mumbadevi,* referring to a Hindu deity worshipped in that locale. Calcutta, the present capital ofWest Bengal and the former capital of India as a whole seems to derive its name from *kali* (lime) and *katta* (brush).[7] Trivandrum (Thiruvananthapuram) seems to mean "The Sacred Abode of Prince Vishnu." European place-names also commemorate divinities, though they appear less frequently than in India: Odense, in Denmark, for example, was dedicated to the Norse God, Odin, sometime before ca. A. D. 1000.

Place-names which commemorate persons or sites of historical and cultural importance would include: Ahmadabad, in northwest India, refers to "Ahmad's town", celebrating the sultan Ahmad Shah, who founded the city in 1411; Pondicherry, which derives from a name of Tamil origin meaning "new town"; Anaradhapura, a town in Sri Lanka, named for Anuradha, minister of prince Vijaya, who arrived from India with the first settlers; in Japan, Omiya, a northern suburb ofTokyo, means "big shrine", and refers to the Shinto Hikawa Shrine, said to have been established as early as the 5th century A. D.; Hakodate, which means "box house" or "box fort", alluding to the nearby fort of Goryokaku, the only Western-style fort in Japan.

There are, of course, toponymic etymologies with ironic relevance to the current reputations of the current sites. Chicago, that mecca of good restaurants and robust cuisine, derives from the Algonquin word for "a place of garlic", referring to the wild onion that grew in the area rather than to the earthy cooking in the "Second City." The etymology of Manhattan seems prophetically judgmental about certain unsavory happenings in modern New York: the "anecdotal interpretations" of Manhattan designate it as a "place of drunkenness" or "place where we are cheated", referring to incidents there. It is hard to tell whether these are merely accurate designations of past activity equally appropriate now, or whether they are unscholarly projections back into time of present tendencies. Wishful thinking motivates a number of toponyms, as in Xian ("Western Peace") and Lanzhou ("orchid city", in which "orchid" implies sophistication) in China, Mangalore (from the Sanskrit words for "happiness," "good fortune," and "town"). Joy, Texas and Truth, Montana would fall in this category. These aspirational toponyms should not be dismissed as mere wishful thinking. The fact that William Jefferson Clinton was born in Hope, Arkansas was effectively promoted in a memorable campaign video in the 1992 election. The fact that Harry S Truman came from Independence, Missouri very much added to his cachet. Sometimes, as with Hebron, the etymology turns out to be a wry comment on how the site has *failed* to fulfill its onomastic destiny: for Hebron derives from the Hebrew words for "joining" and "uniting"; even its Arabic name seems a recrimination on the turmoil decimating the contemporary site: *alkhalil ar-rahman* means "the friend of the merciful." There are interesting coincidences as well: although Pitcairn Island was named after an English midshipman Robert Pitcairn, the sailor who first sighted the island from HMS *Swallow*, the name Pitcairn is also an apt description of the island's rocky, rugged terrain, with its many "pits" and "cairns."

Toponymic Tributes

We may be struck by a prevalence in the New World, especially in the United States, of places named after individuals, and the relative scarcity of such place-names in the Old World as well as in traditionally Asian countries. George Washington was definitively the "father of his country", and his memory is preserved in the nation's capital, in one of the fifty states, and in countless towns, counties, and villages. As influential as Washington may have been on U. S. history, it cannot compare with the enduring influence, over two and a half millenia, of Confucius in Asia. Yet, there is, I believe, not one landmark in all of Asia that is named for Confucius – no Confuciusville, no Kungzicun ("Confucius town"). It is the contrast between the mindset that finds the plethora of places named after a person unexceptional in the U. S. and in New World thinking generally, and the mindset in Asia that would eschew the designation of a place after an individual, however indisputably influential that individual might be.

Of course, the Old World, especially the imperial Old World, did indeed have cities named after luminaries: Alexandria in Egypt comes famously to mind. Yet this practice does not occur often, and certainly there is no widespread recognition of Europe's greatest hegemons in the toponyms of the land. If Washington is the figure most often celebrated in place-names in the United States, Queen Victoria can be said to be the honoree of choice from around the world. In addition to Victoria, the capital of the Seychelles; Victoria, the former designation of Hong Kong Island; Victoria, the capital of British Columbia; there is also Lake Victoria, separating Uganda and Tanzania; and Victoria Falls, between Zambia and Zimbabwe. Some toponyms are the same, and appear to honor the same individual, but are in fact celebrating altogether different people: Augusta in Georgia was named for Princess Auguste (1719-1772), future mother of George III of England; Augusta, the capital of Maine, was named for Pamela Augusta Dearborn, daughter of the Revolutionary officer, Henry Dearborn (1751-1820), who was marshal for the District of Maine for four years, 1789-1793; and Augusta in eastern Sicily does not even refer to a person but is a truncated form of *augusta venerandas*, meaning "grand (place) worthy to be revered". Alexandria in Louisiana does not commemorate the legendary conqueror but commemorates Alexander Fulton, on whose land grant, made by the Spanish, the original settlement was founded in 1785. On the other hand, there are toponyms that look different, but actually celebrate the same individual: it may not be immediately obvious who Saragossa honors, since it derives from the Spanish *Zaragoza*, itself a corruption, through Arabic, of its Roman name, Caeserea Augustus, under whom it became a Roman colony in 27 B.C.

Homage to Contemporary Luminaries

Some toponymic onomasts have also taken to citing patrons and potentates when naming places, as in Mauritius, named by the Dutch for Maurice of Nassau, *stadholder* of the Dutch Republic in 1584; Leopoldville, now Kinshasa, the capital of what used to be known as the Belgian Congo, honoring the Belgian king Leopold II, 1835-1909; Lafayette (Indiana), named for the Marquis de Lafayette, 1757-1834, who happened to be visiting when the city was being laid out in 1825; the Carolinas, which, owing to the vagaries of political shifts, indeed alluded to three Charleses: Charles IX of France, Charles I, and Charles II, of England; Lake Edward, named by Henry Morton Stanley for Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, and the future Edward VII (Idi Amin renamed Idi Amin

Dada during the five years of his reign, but neither the name nor Amin's reign survive); Mount McKinley was named after the 25th President of the United States, William McKinley. Lesser, more regional luminaries whose memories are preserved in toponyms would include: Colonel Tom S. Lubbock (Lubbock, Texas); Francis Nash, a Revolutionary General killed in battle (Nashville, Tennessee); Major William Lauderdale, who led an expedition against the Seminoles in Florida (Fort Lauderdale); Sir Thomas Macdougall Brisbane, who was governor of New South Wales from 1821-1825 (Brisbane, Australia); Louis XVI of France was remembered for his crucial aid during the American Revolution by the city fathers of Louisville, Kentucky; Stephen Decatur (1779-1820), a naval hero of the War of 1812: his life may have ended in a duel, but his memory lives on in Decatur, Illinois; Louis Agassiz, known for his studies of glaciers, lives on in Lake Agassiz in southern Canada; Sir Francis Beaufort (1774-1857), British admiral and hydrographer to the Royal Navy, is commemorated in the designation of the Beaufort Sea; and Sam Houston, familiar to any Texan, lives on in the city named after him. The British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898) is memorialized in the city and port in eastern Australia.

Onomastic founders

The practice of naming a place after the person who founded it, or who first discovered it, is of course widespread. We have Kishangarh, which means "Kishan's fort" alluding to its founder in 1611, Kishan Singh, a warrior ruler of Rajputana. There is also Bandar Abbas in northern Iran, which means "port of Abbas", referring to its being founded in 1623 by Shah Abbas I. Yet, if one surveys this toponymic honor roll, we find very few individuals who are known for any other achievements. But for their association with the toponym, many of these figures would hardly be remembered today: Jacques La Ramie (Laramie, Wyoming); Christopher Newport and William Newce (Newport News, Virginia); Zebulon M. Pike (Pike's Peak), George Vancouver (Vancouver, British Columbia); Josiah D. Whitney (Mount Whitney); Peter Puget (Puget Sound); Louis Antoine de Bougainville (Bougainville in the western Pacific), William Allen (Allentown, Pennsylvania), Charles W. Fairbanks (Fairbanks, Alaska); William

Bingham (Binghamton, New York); Frederick K. Billings (Billings, Montana); Eugene Skinner (Eugene, Oregon); Mathias Day (Daytona Beach, Florida); Jonathan Dayton (Dayton, Ohio); Abner Norman (Norman, Oklahoma); – none of these have any major claim on historical memory. By contrast, there was a town in Montana who aspired to the eminence of Joe Montana, the professional football player, by changing its name to: "Joe".

Some onomasts who ventured into hitherto "unexplored" territory were soon desperately in need of a supply of names, and so took to the practice of devising toponyms that refer to subordinates or family members. George Vancouver, who led the expedition to the northwest territories in 1792, was especially prone to pepper the region with the names associated with his expedition. The "Puget" in Puget Sound was a second lieutenant on his ship; Port Orchard is not a topographical toponym, but alludes to H. M. Orchard, a clerk on Vancouver's ship, *Discovery*; Port Townsend, which recalls Vancouver's admiration of the Marquis of Townsend; Restoration Point, which honors Restoration Day, May 25, 1660, the day that marked the return of the Stuarts to the throne; and of course, Discovery Bay, which was named after Vancouver's aptly named ship). It was perhaps a reflection of the vanity of the toponymic onomast (which is what we may call those who establish place-names) that relatives and acquaintances were thought worthy of being honored in perpetuity. Henry Johnson (1809-1874) was the first postmaster of Johnson City, Tennessee; George Hamilton (1787-1835) was merely the son of the Hon. Robert Hamilton, who was the original owner of the land on which Hamilton, Canada was established; Robert Harper's claim to immortality stems from the fact that he organized a ferry across the Potomac River at Harper's Ferry; Ellis Island commemorates Samuel Ellis, an early owner of the island; Ames, Iowa, presumably owed much to Oates Ames (1864-1873), a railroad financier and Massachusetts congressman, since they adopted his family name for the city; Henry Millard was, exceptionally, fond of his brother-in-law, since he named Beaumont (Texas) for him; Colonel William Lytle chose to honor his friend, Colonel Hardy Murfree (1752-1809) when he named Murfreesboro (Tennessee). And two settlers, John Allen and Elisha W. Rumsey, showing an uxoriousness rare among toponymic onomasts, named Ann Arbor (Michigan) for their wives, who were both named Ann.

Toponymic Reflections of Cultural Values

This informal survey of toponyms around the world, which is far from exhaustive, still manages to suggest certain patterns that might be confirmed with further research. It would appear that topographic toponyms are more often the norm in Old World countries, especially in Asia, whereas personal and honorific toponyms tend to occur more often in New World countries. Personal honorifics tend to be common in New World toponyms, but rare in the Old World. (Exceptions in Asia would include: Sihanoukville in Cambodia; Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam; Gandhinagar in India; and Toyota City in Japan.) Certainly, it was not required that a toponymic honoree in the New World enjoy great eminence or distinction. Lowly lieutenants, postmasters, mere soldiers alike were memorialized: even family relatives and friends. I suspect that the native American names of those places where explorers or colonists assigned personal names were, in all likelihood, topographic rather than biographic in meaning. Cross-cultural evidences of fundamental differences in identity and self-fashioning are manifest in the toponyms one finds in any country. What appears universal is the general tendency toward topographic toponyms: personal honorifics become rife only after the Age of Discovery, and reflect not only a disregard of the local terrain, but also arbitrary impositions of human identity on a given site. That Asians are less inclined toward these anthropomorphic designations than Westerners may indicate a sense of impropriety in nominalistically giving one's own name to the land. One may identify with the place of one's origins, but at least in Asia, one is not comfortable assigning to the land a human identity.

In this sense, with topographic toponyms, human identity derives from the land, and is associated with it, but the land is never "conquered" nominalistically. The place-names in Shakespeare are metonymies for individual historical figures, whereas in many New World sites, individual historical figures, and not even the most eminent, become metonymies of place. If we analyze these different practices, I think it is possible to discern two radically different paradigms of identity and situatedness. In the one case, we derive our strength from the land: like Antaeus in Greek myth, our strength stems from the soil in which we have our roots, our humility lies in never forgetting where we came from, our self-esteem and our self-image reflects our pride of progenerative place. No matter how worldly we become, how urbane our self-fashioning, we are comfortable with our native identities. In the opposite case, however, there is a sense of hierarchy in places of origin. Some places of origin are regarded by some with embarrassment. We receive our distinction from our place of origin. Hence, to be a New Yorker will represent more cachet than to come from Oshkosh (Wisconsin), Peoria (Illinois), or Dubuque (Iowa) – to name three place-names usually associated with the "sticks". In the United States, especially, one encounters an urban-rural dichotomy, where rural origins are "prisons" one escapes from, and urban locations are meccas to flock to. We might speculate as to when these attitudes took hold – perhaps they coincide with a movement toward urbanization, which almost always result from impoverishment (and hence social shame) in the countryside, and economic opportunity in the metropolis.

In these post-modern, multicultural times, when the internet makes it possible for everyone (or virtually everyone) to inhabit a "global village," the dichotomies between urban sophistication and rural innocence may no longer apply. Bangalore, the Silicon Plateau, is as accessible as enclaves of northern California known as "Silicon Valley." The relevance of the way we name the unknown is not merely a matter of onomastics: it reflects our predisposition towards discovery, our paradigms for understanding. The names used in the Space Program – Thor, Atlas, Jupiter, Apollo, Gemini, Saturn, Mercury – reflect not only our aspirations (one might say our presumptions), but also our sense of mythology, connecting our distant futures with our distant pasts. There is, in these appellations, humility combined with arrogance: we construct space-travelling machines and christen them with the names of gods – the word "christen" is, of course, not without onomastic interest – in the hope that they will acquire divine attributes. The gods that humans have worshipped in the past may indeed be the emblems if not the auguries of the future.

How we label ourselves and our works is crucial to who we are and how we see ourselves. Are our identities to be rooted to both a time and a place? And do our place-names reflect their own topography or – increasingly – our own hagiography? These are questions not merely for the semantic etymologist but for the comparative scholar, for only in finding out how we describe our domain will we truly learn to "know our place."

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Interiorization as a Literary Device

AYYAPPA PANIKER

In "Richard Cory," a well known poem by Edward Arlington Robinson, the central figure is the envy of his neighbourhood, but his tragic end is rather unexpected. It is a tightly constructed poem well worth quoting here in full, at least to examine how carefully the climax or anti-climax is achieved.

> Whenever Richard Cory went down town
> We people on the pavement looked at him:
> He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
> Clean favored, and imperially slim.
>
> And he was always quietly arrayed,
> And he was always human when he talked;
> But still he fluttered pulses when he said:
> "Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.
>
> So on we worked, and waited for the light,
> And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
> And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
> Went home and put a bullet through his head.

The Cory that put a bullet through his head, it seems, is the internalized self of the Cory who was apparently the envy of his neighbours. The readers of the poem, like the people of the neighbourhood, could never feel that there was anything wrong with Richard Cory. The rather abrupt and cryptic ending of the poem, synchronizing with the ending of the man's life, takes the neighbours as well as the readers by surprise. And the surprise is due to the fact that there was nothing in the poem or in Cory's life that would clearly point to the suicide unemotionally reported. That there are people whose inside cannot be predicted from the outside is obvious enough, but the way the poetic effect is achieved by unceremonious style of bland reporting is specially calculated to interiorize the other Cory. Here one may notice interiorization at least at three levels: at the level of character for highlighting the contrast between Cory as others see him and Cory as known only to himself; at the level of style, encapsulating an event of tragic possibility in a seemingly low-toned variety of understatement, muted and drained of emotion; and at the level of poetic form, using a solemn, sonnet-like structure to project a story-line that is only negatively suited for that form. Behind and within the formal organization of the poem conceived in neat quatrains is a casual approach to the whole experience presented therein, which belies the surface structure. In fine, the poem interiorized is quite a contrast to the poem one reads.

In "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Keats appears to project a multilayered poetic composition, which on one level is a comment on poetic craft itself, but is also a demonstration of how human experience is structured in a lyrical poem such as an ode. "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard sweeter": the literal untruth of the statement conceals a poetic figure of speech, implying that melodies which may not be heard now have the potentiality for being sweeter when heard than those that are now heard. This is the beauty that eventually becomes truth, and the illogical assertion is made to sound correct, because the equation of truth and beauty is really the indication of a possibility, and not a fact of life. Examples of other unrealized possibilities are mentioned in the poem–for instance, the lover who is eagerly hoping to kiss the lady: it remains an unrealized, but realizable possibility. The reader's imagination is activated to work out the seeming contradiction or the literal illogicality. The experience that a poem can provide is necessarily of that order; it can establish its relevance by being impossible in a literal sense. This ability to bypass an apparent logical contradiction itself raises the experience hinted at in the poem to the level of the imagination. The bare statement of a factual truth deprives it of all potentialities; logical contradiction may thus be seen as a way of circumventing logical relevance and establishing imaginative realization. What is contradicted by cold logic is upheld by the alchemy of the imagination. The reader of the poem, like the lover in it being held back from imprinting his kiss on the lady, is also kept in suspended animation, and it is this expectation of what might happen, even when it does not happen in rational terms, is what gives vibration to the whole poem. In other poems also by Keats, we have images of factual non-fulfillment which lead to enriched imaginative fulfillment: the unseen nightingale in "Ode to a Nightingale" and the songs of autumn in "Ode to Autumn" are instances in point. The urn itself is a symbol of past experience, and on the urn which is reminiscent of death are pictures of life, i.e., life represented by works of art. Both the urn and the pictures themselves are in a sense in contrast with life, being imaginative representations of life, at one remove from life itself. The urn may stand for death, the absence of life, life's negative presence, hence in a way an intenser form of life in poetic terms. The songs are sung not "to the sensual ear," but "to the spirit." All the emphasis on negative presence expressed through the vocabulary of negation–unravished, quietness, silence, slow, soft, etc.–points to the virtue of negative capability, the potential as opposed to the achieved Keats's personal life of 25 years underscores the value of desire and not fulfillment. Experience here is interiorized, i.e. left to the imagination, and not to the reality. The man with the pipe shown on the urn does not produce music, hence he can continue to play forever.

G.M. Hopkins' term "inscape" is an eloquent testimony to the operation of interiorization in literary text, although he used it to refer ultimately to the visible presence of God in every work of creation. Applied to specific literary works, to Hopkins' own poems in particular, inscape may be taken to mean the perception of beauty in a work of art–just as there is godhead in the interior of Nature–which is also the principle of creativity. To see the image of Christ on the cross in the figure of the windhover with wings outspread is an act of creativity, just as making a reader perceive the divine will, god's grandeur, present in all objects of Nature is also creative. The gap in the poetic text is supplied by the collaborative reader, and the poem becomes a thing alive, with the quidditas or thinginess manifested in natural objects shines like "shook foil." The golden echo is subsumed in the leaden echo, in the same way as the word "spare" can be evoked from "despair."

Perhaps the most complex example of interiorization on multiple levels is Shakespeare's play, which is a re-working of the Renaissance mind on the medieval psyche, is *Hamlet*. "By indirections find directions out" is a phrase that holds the key to this magic lock. At the very centre of the process of interiorization in *Hamlet* is the projection of inaction as action in this play. Deferred action is the chief concern of the characters, the playwright and the reader/spectator. The arrival of the ghost is intended to precipitate action, but it actually suggests caution and thus causes delay. The soliloquies of the hero are as much a means of moving towards action as of moving away from it through excessive self-analysis and verbalization. The play consumes the hero, who in turn consumes the action: speech swallows up action: words, words, words interiorize deeds, The act of non-action may be seen throughout the play: Claudius is as uncertain and vacillating as Hamlet, Gertrude as upset as Ophelia, and Polonius and Laertes prove active only to bring about their own unsuspected end. Rosencrantz and Guildenstem are agents of unintentional delay until they get what they deserve without their own knowing it. The play within the play strangely interiorizes the play in which it appears, partly whetting Hamet's revenge and partly undermining it. This process of mutual interiorization by different elements of the play adds to the complexity of the work. Events seem to control their own courses, and in the end work at cross purposes: multiple deaths take place where one death or murder was sought to be avoided. The psychic density of the experiences depicted in the play is the direct result of this interplay of interiorization, which in a play, more than in a poem or a narrative, has unforeseen consequences. And this happens without any authorial intention or intrusion.

In *Hamlet* many a character claims to have "interiorized" other characters, and this results in many mini-plays centred around those characters. Polonius is the grand "interiorizer" who knows everything just about everybody else, and this is his own undoing in the end–i.e. his own end which long before the end of the play, where the other characters about whom he knew so much have their own tragic end. He is the conscience-keeper of the king; he physically interiorizes himself by hiding behind the arras to reach his death faster; he knows the mind of Hamlet, of Laertes, and of Ophelia. Almost everyone is hoist with his own petard: that shows the dramatization of this very dramatic device ofinteriorization within the mind of characters. From the playwright it appears to have spread to some of the characters; the ghost is one such device of interiorizing a character who is no longer alive, but is very actively controlling the destinies of the living ones. The Hecuba episode is interiorized by the players, who in turn are interiorized by Hamlet's plot against the plot of Claudius. The whole play seems to be an attempt to dramatize the very technique of interiorization at all possible levels; it re-emphasizes the meta-dramatic feature of the play.

Milton's "On His Blindness" starts by questioning God's right to expect man to serve Him without the means to do so. But as the sonnet proceeds, the question turns against God Himself and Milton's blindness becomes a sort of protest against God's blindness to human limitations. The poem is a means of working out this dilemma and by the end of the poem the blind ness is removed with the realization that "They also serve who only stand and wait." The multiple implication of blindness between the opening "When I consider..." and the closure "They also serve ..." raises the query "on whose blindness? Milton the man, or Milton the poet, or Milton's God, or Milton's reader? A similar turn-about occurs in "Paradise Lost" also, where the authorial intention of "justifying the ways of God to man" is at least partially undermined by the exposure of the unjustness of God to man. The deliberate purpose of a writer in a creative work is often miscarried like this, since the writing of a poem, or for that matter, any piece of creative work, is subtly influenced or even dominated by the poet's own sub-conscious propensities, which play a vital role in the creative process. Milton's own opposition to autocratic tendencies puts him for a time on the side of Satan, the rebel, and through him against God, thereby nullifying his declared intention to justify God's ways. There are other instances of the work of an author going against his declared purpose. Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography, entitled in English translation "The Story of my Experiments with Truth" carries an introduction dated 1925, which explains the circumstances of its composition, which begins thus:

> Four or five years ago, at the instance of some of my nearest co-workers, I agreed to write my autobiography. I made the start, but scarcely had I turned over the first sheet when riots broke out in Bombay and the work remained at a standstill. Then followed a series of events which culminated in my imprisonment at Yeravda.

This unexpected interruption probably has a small lesson for students of autobiographical writing, in that the shadow falls squarely on any attempt to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, i.e., the sheer impossibility for anyone, even a Mahatma Gandhi, to tell the truth or even experiments with truth without any operation of the author's wishful thinking or fantasizing to meddle with the factual reporting. One can at best record what one remembers or thinks he remembers, and not everything one remembers is exactly the factual truth. There is this danger in clubbing truth with autobiography: the two are indeed irreconcilable. The very act of remembering tampers with facts as they are; and anyone's remembrance is a highly edited one. For one thing, documentation is a hopelessly limited task of arraying available facts as per an expected or imposed order "Conscience makes cowards of us all," when it comes to one's own past experiences. Our impressions are perpetually being modified in the light of new experiences and expectations. Gandhiji refers to the remarks of a God-fearing friend of his, who advised him to desist from the temptation to write an autobiography. No autobiography can, moreover, claim to be truthful, since the writer has an image of himself, and what he writes has to approximate to that self-image. This will result in perpetual modification and partial blindness, so much so that a truthful autobiography is a contradiction in terms. Readers too are likely to look at a self-styled true-life-story with their own accumulated disbelief and cynicism. Self-denigration, as well as self-justification, is likely to stray from truth; and that autobiography which claims to document all truth misleads readers more fundamentally than honest half-truths. The "I" that is interiorized in an autobiography is a homogenized personality with the commercially valuable ISI imprint. This is in a way corroborated by Gandhiji's own comment or warning at the end of the introduction:

> I hope and pray that no one will regard the advice interspersed in the following chapters as authoritative.

Perhaps this caution is already contained in the title of the work, which the author would call only a "story." And the "story" here interiorizes the self-image of the author His intention is to tell us everything–good and bad, ugly things too, whether we like it or not: the reader has no say in the matter. It is a kind of confessional autobiography where the author assumes that the reader will swallow everything helplessly and without resistance. The authorial intention is clearly stated in the introduction:

> ...I am not going either to conceal or understate any ugly things that must be told. I hope to acquaint the reader fully with all my faults and errors. My purpose is to describe experiments in the science of Satygraha, not to say how good I am. In judging myself I shall try to be as harsh as truth, as I want others also to be.

This is very much in the style of advertising true-life stories. Why should anyone assume that truth always is and should be harsh. There may be truths that are not harsh at all, but pleasing, soothing, beautiful. If it is deliberately assumed that whatever is written here should be harsh, that is then less than the truth. One cannot, and perhaps should no predetermine the nature of truth. In any case, the reader is not in a position to verify whether all that is narrated is truth, and whether everything has been deliberately made harsh. Or, could there be desire to see that if harsh things are narrated, the reader will automatically derive the opposite meaning? Will the reader on his own translate everything unfavourable into favourable things? It is obvious, however, that the author wants to influence the reader ultimately in his favour. He may appear to judge himself harshly, but he may not want the reader to do so. In the case of this autobiography at least the readers have by and large exonerated the author of harshness and given him a clean chit.

Sri Aurobindo's "Savitri" may be read as a reduction of the puranic legend, in which on the face of it the devoted wife is able to restore life to her dead husband. Many people read it as an exempla of the triumph of chastity, where even the god of death has to bow before a chaste wife. Obviously, here the author is not interested merely in singing the praise of chastity, but the resurgence of the human spirit through a manifestation of what might be called integral yoga, Such an interpretation is illustrative of the application of exteriorization, which is not to be disputed. When a work like "Savitri" happens to be the magnum opus of a major Indian poet, it means more than what it says on the surface. Aurobindo's past political orientation, his own deep inwardness and capacity for philosophic introspection, his interest in symbolism and mysticism, his cultivation of the poetics of mantra, and above all his visionary nature seem to take us beyond the literal and the exterior dimensions. His use of the epic mode, so far it appears the only successful exploitation of the classical epic mode by any living Indian writer in English, hints at the possibility of a deeper significance. The grand opening of Book One, The Symbol Dawn, is calculated to direct the reader's attention to "something far more deeply interfused" than the mere retelling of the old legend of a wife's recovery of her husband, Of course, the primary meaning and structure are very relevant, and the story of the power of love has a universal appeal–which is not to be denied or bypassed. But the tone and texture of the poem point to other possibilities of reading this magnificent work, and a fairly good clue is given by the heavy emphasis in the words and images of negation in the opening itself: it is not the hour of God, but "the hour before the Gods awake." The incantatory power of the incandescent words cannot be forgotten; the predawn atmosphere is a means of interiorizing a multiple-level significance. The whole of that book, if not the whole work, is "charged with the grandeur of God."

> It was the hour before the Gods awake.
> Across the path of the divine Event

> The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone
> In her unlit temple of eternity,
> Lay stretched immobile upon Silence' marge.
> Almost one felt, opaque, impenetrable,
> In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse
> The abysm of the unbodied Infinite;
> A fathomless zero occupied the world
> A power of fallen boundless self awake;
> Between the first and the last Nothingness,
> Recalling the tenebrous womb from which it came,
> Turned from the insoluble mystery of birth
> And the tardy process of mortality
> And longed to reach its end in vacant Nought.
> As in a dark beginning of all things,
> A mute featureless semblance of the Unknown
> Repeating for ever the unconscious act,
> Prolonging for ever the unseeing will,
> Cradled the cosmic drowse of ignorant Force
> Whose moved creative slumber kindles the suns
> And carries our lives in its somnambulist whirl
> Athwart the vain enormous trance of Space,
> Its formless stupor without mind or life,
> A shadow spinning through a soulless Void
> Thrown back once more into unthinking dreams,
> Earth wheeled abandoned in the hollow gulfs
> Forgetful of her spirit and her fate.

The accumulation of negative images repeated with obsessive insistence is perhaps intended to create a vacuum in time and space that will be a poetic symbol of stagnation, lack of freedom and cessation of creative activity–about thirty images of deprivation and loss in as many lines–that is, at the rate of at least one per line. This building up of emptiness or *sunyata*, this cleaning and cleansing, as it were, seems to be a necessary ritual before the attempt to fill it up with meaning. This filling up is undertaken in the rest of the poem, as we may see particularly in the last cantos, which deal with the realization. The recovery of life, the return to earth and the redemption of happiness are worked out at the end. One is tempted to read *Savitri* as an epic of interiorized decolonization written in the language of the colonizer, but mastered by the erstwhile colonized.

What leads a reader to look for underlying themes in the text other than the relationship between Savitri and Satyavan is the sheer insistence the author shows in the references to metaphors ofinteriorization throughout the epic poem: veiling, hiding, behind, beyond, curtained, prisoned, etc., along with expressions of joy, fulfillment, and the very titles of Cantos like "The Entry into the Inner Countries," "The Journey in Eternal Night and the Voice of the Darkness," and "The Eternal Day." While the political interpretation is certainly not the only legitimate one, it certainly strikes one as one of the several possibilities of interpreting a dense text such as *Savitri.* From the first line of the first book, "It was the hour before the Gods awake" to the last line "in her bosom nursed a greater dawn," the sequence of "dawn-night-dawn" is put to heavy duty so as to re-emphasize the theme ofinteriorization. The career of Satyavan as sketched in the poem can be demystified to suggest the historic destiny of India; the liberation of India completed a year or two before the completion of the poem, the mystic significance of *satyagraha* as the means by which the liberation of Satyavan as well as that of India was brought about, the life-time preoccupation of the author with India, not as a geographical location, but as the symbolic locale of the human spirit seeking integral yoga, and the importance given to the moral-spiritual aspect of freeing life from the clutches of death: all these may be taken as suggestive of the larger significance of the story of Satyavan and Savitri, not just at the individual level, but also at the level of the whole of mankind. *Ramayana, Mahabharata,* the *Iliad,* the *Odyssey,* the Aeneid, and the *Divine Comedy* are all community-oriented texts with large-scale political implications. Aurobindo's *Savitri* too, the most important of the epics or long narratives of modem India, carries a deeper message: it emerges as the national epic of modem India, with social, political, cultural and spiritual levels of meaning. That Aurobindo has, consciously or otherwise, interiorized the theme of political struggle and liberation–as suggested by the images of the journey through the dark night of the soul and the dawn of liberation and fulfillment–in this retelling of an ancient myth should be clear to anyone who is sensitive enough to read the poem in depth. Of course, some readers may choose to discover only the moral or spiritual meaning-but no one can afford to miss the device of interiorization, which is used to project the different kinds of signification. Perhaps "the greater dawn" referred to in the closing line may also be taken as an instance of interiorizing these multiple visions of the poet-politician-philosopher, all integrated in the yogi par excellence. To understand and appreciate this, the reader may have to keep away from the conventional reading of Aurobindo, who, one may say, is still awaiting his ideal reader.

Narrative Representations of Landscape: Generic Specificities and their Transformation in History

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Representations of natural landscapes in narratives, specifically where nature is foregrounded in the different constitutive elements of the text, have certain common characteristics. They have, in fact, what genologists would say an inner form and an external form in a specific combination. Yet the combinations are never really static. In spite of the fact that nature is associated with the timeless and the unchanging, representations of natural landscape change in accordance with social and historical changes. Principles of combination among the different constituent elements of the genre change and bring about radical transformations in the overall implications of the narrative. In this paper I will take up three texts to look at the constants and their principles of combination through different places and in different times. One of the sub-themes of this conference is also celebration of space. As I begin my paper I realize that novels that foreground natural landscape are about celebrations and inabilities to celebrate. I bring this in because some of my colleagues had asked how one could write a paper on celebration of space. As I began asking the question myself I realized that much writing on nature is about celebrations and about uncovering the layers that do not allow us to speak in terms of celebrations. As a character in one of the texts I will be dealing with, Jean Giono's *Que ma joie demeure* states, "Pas malheureux, pas heureux, la vie" (No unhappiness, no happiness, life.) And then,"Plus que du souci, de la peur, plus que de la peur, du rien". (14) (More than anxiey, fear. More than fear, nothing.) The passage of this text is through this passive state of indifference or hopelessness to that of joy and ecstasy carried down to the very end of death and sorrow. Such narratives also emerge in particular junctures of history, as regenerative forces. Giono's text came out in 1935. The novel opens with the lines, "C'était une nuit extraordinaire. Il y avait eu du vent, il avait cessé, et les étoiles avaient eclaté comme de l'herbe. Elles étaient en touffes avec des racines d'or, épanouies, enfoncées dans les ténèbres et qui soulevaient des mottes luisantes de nuit." (10) (It was an extraordinary night. There had been a wind, it had stopped and the stars had burst out as if from the grass. They were in clusters with golden roots, in blossoms and stuck into the darkness that held up the shining tufts of night.)

Language in such texts approximates the techniques of painting - making the maximum use of light and shade in the narrative canvas. The story proceeds. Jourdan, the farmer cannot sleep - the moonlight is absolutely clear and the clarity is of 'toute beauté'. He feels the urge to plough the land and he sets out to do so. At the beginning of the text there is a sense of anguish born of the vertiginous experience of looking over a vast expanse of land and a sense of sudden and absolute solitude - another common feature of the genre. Jourdan has the feeling of being weighed down by forces larger than him. But the moonlit night also brings a sense of happy foreboding - somebody is going to come to the valley, somebody who knows how to cure lepers. It is Bobi, the vagabond, who comes into the life of the farmers. Bobi tells them various things, the value of things 'inutile', for instance, that one should leave some land and not cultivate it all, one should plant hawthorn and oak, have beasts that are not domestic, a deer, for instance, that he brings along with him after some time. He asks them if they can see Orion, flower of carrots - first they cannot, but gradually they do. The metaphor comes back again and again signifying the supreme power of the imagination and the ability to see things in terms of unity and not of dispersion. Gradually the plateau becomes a well-defined place that is not limitless but that has well-defined boundaries and as this sense of place concretizes in the imagination of the farmers, they begin to think of themselves in terms of togetherness. They reap a better harvest with their collective efforts and sometimes they have a meal or two together. The limited space also is gradually filled to the point of saturation. And in the midst of all this we encounter a very typical character of this genre, a 'reveur' or 'l'homme de la rêverie'. In the words of Bachelard, he is one who is "de tout parte dans son monde, dans un dedans qui n'a pas de dehors... Le moi ne s'oppose plus au monde. Dans la rêverie, il n'y a plus de non moi...tout est accueil".[2] (in every respect in his world - in an interiority that has nothing of the external... The self does not oppose itself to the world. In the reverie, there is no non-self... All is warmly received.) This is expressed through a relation of transparency between man and nature in very concrete terms. In fact, often under the influence of the 'rêveur', others too experience similar relationships with the external world. Passages such as the ones that follow are frequent - "C'était un vent laiteux comme tout le reste. It était plein de formes, plein d'images, de lueurs, de lumières, de flammes qui n'éclairaient pas un centimetre de la terre mais qui illuminaient tout le dedans du corps." (101) (It was a milky wind, like everything else. It was full of forms, full of images, of glimmers, of lights, of flames which did not light even a centimetre of the earth, but which illumined all the inside of the body.) Or, "Chaque fois que toute la bande épanouissait autour du tas de graines, une fleur de plume s'épanouissait aussi dans Marthe..." (269) (Each time the flock of birds blossomed around the heap of grains, a flower of feathers also blossomed in Martha...) Images of roundness begin to intermingle with vertical images. We are reminded again of Bachelard who sees images of roundness as helping us to gather ourselves in us by affirming our beings in a very intimate manner from inside.[3] The world is envisioned in terms of a spinning top with diverse landscapes. Similarly Bobi is the incarnation of the rounded image - a human wheel, for he is also an acrobat who goes through wheel-like motions with his body. Bobi also feels he will stay in the valley forever. There is also celebration of spring in nature, as also the violence of its new-found life-forces -there is also desire and the satiation of desire in the natural world, but not so in the world of human beings. And then young Aurore dies. Bobi is roused from his state of inertia and plunged back into time as it were. He goes out on a stormy night - visions of vastness begin to assail him once more - and a golden arrow of lightning gets planted on his shoulder. The reader is taken through experiences that are close to utopic and then there is negation of the Utopia, though not a total negation.

The name *Aranyak* (1939) or 'Of the Forest' by Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay, is reminiscent of the ancient scriptures, more precisely of the *Upanishads* also known as the *sastras* of the forest. There is incidentally, quite often a scriptural quality in texts of the genre as they attempt to depict an earthly paradise, to express the inexpressible by exploring the limits of language. In *Aranyak* as well, the vertiginous experience of space at the beginning brings in a sense of fear and solitude, but ends on a peaceful and transcendental note. The duality of anguish and ecstasy found in Giono's text is here replaced by a sense of peace and tranquility, a stillness in which the protagonist loses himself. But there are only short spaces of stillness celebrating the magnificence of the created world - elsewhere it is the story of a host of individuals with very sharp characteristic traits embodying values that may sometimes in a very generalised manner be related to the land that they inhabit. As in the earlier text, there is a constant to and fro journey between what may be termed Plato's chaos, absolute opening into the void, a fearful sense of nothingness, and chora, where one comes to terms with nothingness and fills it with a multitude of beings.[4] In Giono's narrative, there is a journey from one to the other, from panorama to a well-defined space and then again an opening out into the vastness, whereas in Bandopadhyay's text, the two exist on two different planes. Everyday life as such has very little connection with nature as it is experienced by the protagonist. The narrative presents the journey of the educated middle-class protagonist into the heart of nature. The protagonist comes to a forest-land in the district of Purnea to attend to his new-found job of selling ten thousand acres of land in the plateau belonging to a zamindar. The city-bred man feels totally alien to his surroundings at first, but very soon gets drawn in by the magical beauty of the plateau and the charm and warmth of the simple village people around him. His point of view remains objective all through – although there are moments when he becomes a 'rêveur' or 'l'homme de la rêverie', becoming one with his surroundings. During these moments he realises the necessity of a certain attitude, a long and deep association with nature, a certain imagination as well as the intervention of a mysterious force in order to realise and re-present the beauty of nature. An engaged faith brings in accents of certitude absent in the self-reliance of Giono's narrative. There is again a celebration of space, unclouded by the fact that most of the space will soon be violated, lost forever by the very efforts of the narrator-protagonist. Certain moments exist in the present alone, cut off as it were from the flow of time. The tone is for the most part that of a romance, though set, not in rarefied space, but in an actual region with a specific flora and fauna. *Aranyak* is a popular text among Bengali readers and a large number of them remember the text for its panorama of colourful individuals - Jugalprasad Panre, who brings seeds and seedlings from distant lands and plants them on the hills and forests near Labtulia - an extremely poor man he seems to have no other concern in the world apart from planting different kinds of flowers in the forest. There is Matuknath, the pundit who is happy to have a place where he can teach and so even without students, he happily takes classes in his empty classroom and there is the old tribal king of the hills seen tending his cattle and the princess Bhanumati attending to her guests with a simple dignity. Then there are a host of faceless characters presented in terms of hunger and poverty - there are people who walk for miles and wait for days when they hear that the 'babu' is coming on an official visit, hoping that they would get to eat some rice. The protagonist declares that it is here that he gets to see the face of the reality that is India.

Narratives of landscape are often linked with issues of cultural identity. Often narrators bring in a rich, metaphoric system linking humanity and culture to the land, to geography and to local values and beliefs. Here again it is history that determines different facets of representation and corresponding links between space and identity. Giono's narrative in this context, does not represent an elsewhere, asserting cultural values through a kind of euphoria. What the reader encounters in his narrative is not solicitude for the virgin purity of the world, but the conceptualisation of possible alternative ways of living. As a character states, "L'important, c'est de redevenir les blondasses vagabonds du monde. Je suis contre le pouvoir des hommes."(What is important is to become a 'blondasse'-vagabond of the world. I am against the power of men). This alternative emerges from a society that has known material prosperity. The author had also served in the war. The narrative is a quest for joy, through a magnificent and sophisticated realignment of elements within and without - where the interventionist role of the imagination is supreme. The vagabond whose imaginative intervention transforms sadness into joy is one who has seen a thousand sunsets in the plateau, encountered scores of storms and seen the sky meeting the earth a million times. There is a subtle and complex relationship between the imagination which transforms and the natural landscape. Within the larger anthropomorphic world-view, there is another, not really biocentric, but one that accords respect to each being as having a good of its own, irrespective of human subjective value concepts - an approach that already foresees the approaching civilizational crisis and suggests possible remedies.

Aranyak too comes forward as a text that is representative of its time, in spite of its engagement with the eternal, non-changing aspects of nature. In this, as well as in his other texts, Bibhutibhusan comes forward as an author who foregrounds a particular component in the cultural psycne, one which, for historical reasons had been submerged ever since the invention of print and that is the presence of a rural landscape in the make-up of the urban reader at least till the early sixties. The protagonist and his sense of identity manifested both in the representation of the world of nature and the world of its inhabitants along with the gap between the two is also symptomatic of its time. The protagonist does what is in his power to do as far as poverty is concerned, but these are acts of charity. There are other larger issues such as the eviction of settlers because of changes in the course of the river and then the non-recognition of their rights when the river again changes its course and yields up the land, with which the protagonist does not engage. Questions of intervention or agency remain outside the scope of the narrative, bearing testimony perhaps to certain prevalent social structures as well as to the larger effects of colonialism. That the educated, Bengali middle-class protagonist remains disengaged and an outsider, as pointed out by Professor Sisir Kumar Das in one of his essays,[5] that he has certain derivative notions relating to progress and civilization, wondering why certain groups of people rapidly made progress, constructed civilizations, and why certain other groups remained in darkness and where they were for centuries, why nomadic groups do not have any concern for their surroundings, point to certain historical configurations also involving systems of education. The strength of the text however, also stems from what at this historical juncture this particular reader calls a weakness, that is the non-interventionist approach. The same approach leads perhaps to the quiet, non-aggressive tone and the large novelistic space accorded to the fragile, less celebrated aspects of nature - unknown herbs and flowers with their mild fragrance, their non-aggressive beauty that contribute to the particular charm of the text.

Regional novels foregrounding landscape constitute a very important section of narrative literature in India. One can also read them in terms of a comment on the national rhetoric of identity. Many of them construct a world that is an 'other', but with a density of signifiers resisting mythicizing at all levels. However, there is generally very little interaction between the represented world and the world of the author-narrator to which the reader also obliquely belongs. In recent years, after decades of independence there have been instances of very different forms of landscape representation linked with cultural identity. I have in mind here the writings of Mahasweta Devi and I will end my paper with a very quick reference to a general trend in her writings that quite radically changes the parameters of the genre. Very often in her stories situated in forest lands and plateaus there is a close reassessment of tradition. In one of her stories, 'Shishu', situated in the plateau lands of Jharkhand, the earth is red and hard, the trees dwarfish and the whole area arid and dry. The local myth relating to the land and its people is in keeping with its landscape. The myth states that the Aagarias, inhabitants of Lohri, were a people who lived on fire, ate fire, and bathed in the river of fire while the asuras allowed only the Aagarias to go down into the earth and bring out iron. And then one day a proud Aagaria thought himself to be more powerful than the sun-god. The sun-god came down and burnt everything. But the queen was saved as at that time she was in the village of her parents where she gave birth to a son. In course of time, the son grew up to be a great fighter and challenged the sun. The earth got burnt in the heat of the battle - the prince cursed the sun by saying that only when the moon was in the east would he be able to meet his wife, while the sun cursed them saying that whatever wealth the Aagarias accumulated with their hard work would be burnt to ashes. Since then the Aagarias have been poor. The myth incidentally is repeated in history, in an encounter between the Aagarias and the brutal forces of the state machinery. Into this village comes a relief officer, an educated young man from the city, with all good intentions. His romantic notions related to the rural plateau lands of Jharkhand and its inhabitants receive a jolt as he encounters Lohri and its people. The story maps the journey of the protagonist into the heart of the community with total involvement in his work. The 'homme de la rêverie' becomes a man with an ethical consciousness.[6] Just as he begins to gain the confidence of the people and when the landscape no more appears to him as hostile or strange, an incident occurs where he acts in accordance with his middle-class notions of honesty. As a result, he is taken deeper into the reality of their exploited, poverty-stricken lives, deeper into the forest and what he sees exposed in the midst of a clearing in the forest makes him speechless. He is under the impression that he is following a group of children who had stolen material from the relief camp, only to find that they are actually full-grown fugitive men and women reduced to the stature of children, their dry and withered genitals bearing testimony to their adulthood. Something seems to explode inside his head and everything, all that he had learnt, history, the law of Copernicus, the five year plans, one after the other are all negated - and he reaches the brink of insanity. To enter deeply into the world of the tribal with any kind of conscience is to encounter a confrontation on all levels leading to an epistemological confusion. The journey encountered in landscape narratives, from an overwhelming, vertiginous sense of place to a closed one is here reversed. One moves from an apparently well-defined place to a region where one loses all one's bearings. We also see in this story that as the land and the people shape each other, the urban middle class too grapples with the reality of the tribal or the marginal as part of his being or his identity and at the same time engages with the situation of the tribal or the marginal in contemporary history. Narratives of landscape representation here involve not just journeys into the past or reconstructions of the 'other', but an active engagement with the present, with the creation of an interactive space that brings hope for future action.

NOTES

1. Giano, Jean. *Que ma joie demeure.* Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1935. (The same edition is used for further references.)
2. Bachelard, Gaston. *La poétique de la rêverie.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960, 144.
3. Bachelard, Gaston. *La poétique de l'espace.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957.
4. See also Ghitti, Jean Marc. *La Parole et le Lieu Tropique de l'inspiration.* Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1998.
5. Das Sisir Kumar. 'Aranyak: Bharatbarsha Kon Dikey' in *Bibhutibhusan: Adhunik Jijnasa,* ed. Arun Sen. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1997.
6. This is a term that I borrow from Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak and from Jaidev who invests it with a very special meaning in his article on Daulati in *Kakatiya Journal of English Studies,* Vol. 19, 1998. (Translations in the text are mine.)

Vasco da Gama's First Voyage of Discovery and Denial

DOROTHY M. FIGUEIRA

"Every stranger is an enemy"
Primo Levi, *If This is Man*, 15

I) The Historiographical Dimension

History is shaped by the system in which it is developed. As a combination of a social place, "scientific" practices, and writing, the historical operation takes limited evidence and seeks to unify it into coherence. History, as a practice, collects rarities into a synthesis of "scattered positivities" (Certeau 1988: 56). The act of writing makes oppositions compatible in narrative. It temporalizes and makes coherent something that is heteroclite and irregular. A political will manages conflicts, selects and directs an intelligibility toward normativity (Certeau 1988: 92). It packages concepts (Certeau 1988: 97) in such a way that any reading of the past (no matter how controlled by analysis of documents) is haunted by presuppositions in the form of models of interpretation. History is as much a staging of the past (Certeau 1988: 9) as a fiction of the present.

Modern Western historiography was born out of a rift between subject and object. As such, it is a heterology or a discourse of the

Other. The writing of history is also an expression of a will to know and dominate the body by changing inherited traditions into a textual product through a process of manipulation and analysis. Events do not appear in their immediacy but as objects uniformly exhibited in the present, subject to a particular kind of treatment as a product of a place, procedure and text (Certeau 1988 64). The chronicler restages elements of his own system to figure in the interpretation. As a textual poacher or prowler (Certeau 1988:79), he thus converts alterity into something assimilable to the prevailing configuration of European knowledge.

However, by any selection of materials, shards or remainders are created. In other words, what disappears from the product appears in the production, not so much the personal intentions, but the sociocultural localizations that inspire the foci of research. The product of the endeavor, the narrative, will offer a trace of this trace, since the interpreter does not passively absorb traces of the Other, but operates them, redistributes them and finally writes them up. This does not mean that the interpreter's control, grounded as it is in such techniques, does not pose acute problems for interpretation. In fact, the interpreter's attempts to control material is often interrupted by sounds, when what is repressed returns. This unassimilable residue, which returns in the text to upset the fabrications of interpretation, haunts and disquiets contemporary organizations of meaning.

However, the heterological procedure presents no simple opposition of the Self to the Other, but rather a procedure akin to a form of psychoanalysis. The interpreter's representation of the Other is viewed as contaminated by his own intrusive identity. Implicit instances of social alterity precede the interpreter and their effects continue to inform the interpreter's work, inducing forms of unconscious repetition through which the past returns to haunt the present (Certeau 1986:4). The Other appears then as projections or residues of "legitimate" interpretative operations. It does not refer to any effectively "real" populations or practices. Produced by modern economies of writing, the Other possesses a double status as fable, something that speaks (fari), but a form of speech that does not know what it is saying (Certeau 1984: 160).

The problem with fables, however, is that readers suppose they contain an important truth and that the technically competent reader is capable of extracting this truth whereas the incompetent speaker cannot. Our task as readers is then to extract that which remains unthought in incompetent modes of expression. The learned interpretative concern with the implicit, as the uninformed Other's hidden truth, is directed from within by forces which themselves remain not fully explicated (Aherne 1995: 61). There may, indeed, exist an unbridgeable separation between the interpreter and the intended object since interferences overdetermine representations of alterity and lead the interpreter to produce (under the guise of interpretation) variants of a fantasmic Other.

In the following discussion, I will apply these concerns to the narrative of Vasco da Gama's first voyage. I will focus on the difficulties the notion of discovery present in the text. The anonymous first hand account of da Gama's first voyage, the *Roteiro da Viagem de Vasco da Gama*, begins in a customary manner:

> In the name of God. Amen. In the year 1497, to King Dom Manuel, the first of this name in Portugal, sent out (mandou) to discover (descobrir), four ships,[2] which went in search of spices...

The narrative uses the verb "discover" initially in an intransitive sense. The ships were sent in search of spices, but Manuel sent da Gama to discover. It is my argument that the notion of discovery, as depicted in da Gama's first voyage, enables us to examine those strategies that are employed to assimilate alterity into a familiar. space. I specifically wish to question how encountering the Other ultimately problematized representations of identity and reality.

II) The Voyage

The Portuguese set sail from Lisbon on July 8, 1497. Routing themselves far into the Atlantic Ocean, they passed the Cape of Good Hope on November 16. Arriving in Mozambique, they anchored away from the settlement, off a small island. Here, removed from the prying eyes of the natives, they disembarked in order to make their confessions and celebrate mass. The Portuguese desired to keep their religion a secret. The Sultan, learning of their presence, invited a representative, one of da Gama's captains, Nicolao Coelho, to his palace. They duly exchanged gifts. The Sultan received the impression that the Portuguese were white Moors who had come from Turkey. Coelho did not disabuse him of this misconception. The Portuguese clearly had adopted a strategy.of dissimulation. They did not want those they encountered to know they were Christians (Subrahmanyan 1997: 113). This strategy only worked temporarily. The Portuguese, anticipating native displeasure at their dissimulation, believed a rumor that a plot was afoot to kill them because they were Christians. They hastily left Mozambique, but were forced to return due to bad weather. The Sultan, who clearly surmised that relations had broken down, sent a white Moor "to make peace" and be their "friend." A Moslem and his young son were even dispatched to show the Portuguese the source of fresh water. When they failed in this endeavor, the Portuguese immediately became suspicious. Setting forth on their own under the cloak of darkness, da Gama's men discovered the source but found it guarded. The skirmish that ensued became a minor battle. The Portuguese returned to their ships, fired some artillary at the settlement and promptly left Mozambique (March 29, 1498).

On April 7, they arrived at Mombasa. The Portuguese did not hide their identity as Christians here because they thought themselves to be among their coreligionists. They believed that numerous Christians in Mombasa coexisted peacefully with Moors. And, indeed, upon arrival, they were met by an embassy of two alleged Christians along with four prominent Moors from the community. Having learnt from his experience in Mozambique, da Gama sent two exile-prisoners ashore to visit the two Christians.[3] It was a wise move. When the native pilots escaped, the Portuguese learned from torturing other captive Moors that the inhabitants had plotted revenge on the Portuguese for their behavior in Mozambique should they land. Once again the Portuguese escaped "Moslem treachery".

It did not surprise the Portuguese that they had outwitted the Moors. They believed themselves to be protected by God. As the anointed, the Portuguese Christians juxtaposed themselves to the "treacherous Moslem dogs." This Manichaean dichotomy delineated not only the Portuguese from the peoples encountered, but also distinguished the landscapes "discovered" (Subrahmanyan 1997: 118). The city of Mombasa itself is described as a town split between its Moslem inhabitants and the Christians that it persecutes. In Mombasa, Christians live in an active state of war with the Moslem population. Thus, da Gama is able to rationalize dealing with the native population with the same brutality that the Portuguese would inflict upon any Moslems they encountered in the Mediterranean.[4] Before continuing on his course, da Gama pirates a wealthy Moor's ship.

The Portuguese arrived in Malindi on April 14. Two days later, on the day after Easter, da Gama sent ashore the Moor whose ship he had seized. The ruler of Malindi promised to supply the Portuguese with goods and pilots. Da Gama, as usual, did not set foot on land. Here, he had no reason to be suspicious, as the ruler had left one of his sons as well as the sharif in their custody. Four boats of Indian "Christian" merchants sailed out to meet him. The text speaks of how they carried icons and recited Christian prayers. It related how they venerated both Jesus and the Madonna. They are described as dark skinned and wearing few clothes, beards, and long hair. They did not eat beef and spoke a different language than the Moors. Da Gama was warned that the locals should not be trusted. With their suspicions neatly confirmed, the Portuguese seized one of the King's subjects and demanded a Christian pilot.

These encounters on the African coast serve as a dress rehearsal for Portuguese behavior in Kerala. As da Gama proceeded on his mission, he became increasingly suspicious of the rulers and natives that he encountered. A specific pattern was established beginning in Mozambique and continued to Mombasa and Malindi Upon approaching a commercial center, the Portuguese captain waited for vessels to approach. They took hostages before sending any of their own men ashore. The three captains rarely set foot ashore themselves, even in a favorable location such as Malindi. They usually sent captives ashore brought along precisely for such hazardous tasks. Concessions were customarily extracted from the natives by force, as in the case of obtaining the Christian pilot in Malindi (Subrahmanyan 1997: 121). The need for a pilot was essential, as the Portuguese early on realized that they were technically unable to chart and pilot the ships themselves to India. The desire to "discover" was thwarted by the Portuguese mission's recognition that they would be unable to reach Calicut on their own.[5]

It took twenty three days to traverse the Indian Ocean. The ships anchored on May 20, north of Calicut and da Gama once again sent a convict ashore. Here too, the Moslems that they encountered believed the Portuguese were Christians from the Levant. At this crucial juncture in the narrative, it is the convict-exile, and not Vasco da Gama, who becomes the protagonist (Subrahmanyan 1997: 129) of this famous encounter between East and West.

> He was taken to a place where there were two Moors from Tunis, who knew how to speak Castilian and Genoese. And the first greeting that they gave him was the following:
> The devil take you. What brought you here?
> And they asked him what he had come to seek from so far; and he replied:
> We came to seek Christians and spices. And they said to him: Why do the King of Castile and the King of France and the Seignory of Venice not send men here?
> And he replied that the King of Portugal did not permit them to do so. And they said that he did well. Then they welcomed him and gave him wheaten bread with honey, and when he had eaten, he came back to the ship. And one of those Moors came back with him, who as soon as he entered the ships, began to say these words:
> Buena ventura, buena ventura (Good fortune, good fortune)! Many rubies, many emeralds! You should give many thanks to God for having brought you to a land where there are such riches! We were so amazed at this that we heard him speak and we could not believe it - that there could be anyone so far away from Portugal who could understand our speech (Ravenstein 1898: 54)

The search for Christians in India was a direct continuation of the African quest, where da Gama sought news of Prester John. It is important to note that the desire for Christians did not arise out of any need to prosletize, but out of a need for contact with free Christians beyond Moslem dominion and particularly those believed to dwell in the Indies. It had become Manuel's mission to make the sea navigable as far as India, where Indians worship the name of Christ, enter in relation with them and incite them against the Sarracens. In Africa, the Portuguese created a specific *imaginaire.* They discovered either Christians or Moors. Each group included in their number both whites and blacks, friends and foes. India, however, with her dense and sophisticated network of small trading zones (Subrahmanyan 1997: 130), presented a different situation, as well as more complicated racial configurations and allegiances.

The Portuguese believed that the city of Calicut was populated by Christians. They recognized them to be physically different from other Christians: Indian Christians were dark men, bearded, with long hair or shaven heads. They identified themselves as Christians by the topknots worn on their crowns, moustaches and beards. Although they appeared barbarous (they have their ears pierced, and in the holes they wear much gold, and they walk about naked from the waist up), they are not. They wear certain very delicate cotton-cloths and "are the most honored folk."[6] Da Gama eventually landed among these people and was taken to a large structure he interpreted to be a church. It is this bizarre episode, described with a disingenuousness that is not found elsewhere in the narrative, that I would like to examine in greater depth.

The Portuguese are led to a place that is described in the text to be as large as a monastery. It had a pillar with a bird on top of it, most likely the bird Garuda who protects the god Vishnu. Inside there was an image that was said to be that of Our Lady. Damiao de Goes *(Chronica do felicissimo rev Pom Manoel,* chap. 48) added to the account found in the *Roteiro* that four priests entered the sanctuary, pointed to the image and said: "Maria, Maria" and prostrated themselves. At this point the Portuguese also knelt down in adoration of the Virgin. The anonymous author of the *Roteiro* notes that the images painted on the interior of the Church were, indeed, strange. The saints depicted on the walls had big buck teeth and four and five arms.[7] Castenheda *(Historia do Descobrimento et Conq-uista da India pelos Portugueses,* 1.34-36) related the same episode. He has da Gama also kneel and pray. Joao da Sa, the scrivener on the Sao Rafael, is said to have doubts that they were in a church. Castenheda reports him looking at the paintings and saying: "If this is a devil, I adore the true God." To which, Castenheda relates, da Gama smiled.

The Portuguese were not allowed to enter the inner sanctum of the temple. They said their prayers in the outer enclosure, received water and white ashes "which Christians of this land have the habit of putting on their foreheads and bodies and around the neck and along their upper arms." Da Gama demured, giving the ash to one of his minions with the excuse that he would put it on at a later time. The men wore brahmin threads that the Portuguese took to be decorations that these Christians wore as a sign of their religion.

We can only assume that, given the presence of St Thomas Christians in Kerala, the Hindu natives knew the Portuguese to be Christian (Subrahmanyan 1997:133). This assumption is born out by the fact that they allowed them to enter the temple to pray, but prevented them from entering the inner sanctuary. The Portuguese did not admit to following a similar logic with reference to cultural indicators. They expected to see Christians and, as a consequence, saw them everywhere, no matter how different they appeared. If a place of worship was not obviously a mosque, then it was a Church. The Portuguese chose to be deluded, regardless of the signs pointing to a radically different religion. They convinced themselves that they were in a land of some sort of deviant Christians. Anything not explicitly Moslem had to be Christian. This willing deception, of course, was abetted by the linguistic difficulties of the encounter. The Arabic spoken by their interpreter, Fernao Martins, would have been similar to that spoken in the Maghreb, not similar to the Arabic spoken in Kerala (Subrahmanyan 1997: 133).

A key scene of the Portuguese refusal to engage in "cultural translation"[8] occurs during da Gama's audience with the Samorin [9] of Calicut. Da Gama finds him reclining in a fashion fitting an Oriental despot, surrounded by courtiers, spitting betel into an enormous gold spitoon. Da Gama relates to the raja that the Portuguese kings had been sending ships to India for the last sixty years "to discover." Once again, we find that strange intransitive use of the verb. He notes that they send them because they know that India had Christian kings like them. Da Gama reiterates that the Portuguese do not come in search of gold or silver, since they have plenty of their own. The primary lie here consists of da Gama's claim that the Portuguese do not seek gold.

Always dissimulating, da Gama tells the raja that the king of Portugal is more powerful than the monarchs of France and Spain.

The raja asks da Gama whether he wants to spend the night with Christians or Moslems, as it was the trading custom for foreign merchants to be put up in some ethnic quarter. Da Gama declines. In the following days, the Portuguese try to sell their goods, only to be laughed at by the Moslem traders. When they try to give the raja gifts, their offerings are rejected by the bale as paltry. To save face, da Gama claims that the gifts are personal, not from the King. But the reality is that his gifts are totally unworthy, even for a merchant to offer, let alone a king who had been described as the most powerful in Europe. Da Gama assures the representatives of the Samorin that, when the King of Portugal will send gifts on a subsequent visit, they will be sumptuous. In Calicut, da Gama learns what "oriental" wealth really means.

Da Gama is irked by the position of inferiority in which he finds himself. He seeks a private audience with the ruler, only to be detained by the Moslem merchants' intrigues. The text does not clearly confirm whether the various traps set by the king's men were done with the Samorin's knowledge or simply at the instigation of Moors. When da Gama finally does receive an audience, the Samorin keeps him waiting for hours. When he gains entry, the raja chastises da Gama for not coming as expected the previous day. All these machinations are directed at intimidating da Gama and turning Portuguese discourse back upon itself. The raja finally asks da Gama whether he came "to discover stones or men." If the latter is the case, he demands to know why da Gama has brought nothing of worth. To this query, da Gama has no response. The Samorin next rebukes the Portuguese as the Christian he has been made to be. He asks da Gama to offer him, a Christian king, the gold icon of the Madonna that he heard was on the ship. To which da Gama replies that he cannot part with it. The Samorin has effectively refused to play along with the Portuguese. He challenges their avowed mission, he mocks their pretension of wealth and demands payment (in the form of a gold Madonna) for the role of Christian that the Portuguese have assigned him. He will play act being Christian for the Portuguese, but they must realize that his performance comes at a price. Needless to say, the encounter with the Samorin is unpleasant for da Gama.

The audience concludes with da Gama being given permission to return to his ships for samples of Portuguese products. However, on route, da Gama's palanquin is overtaken by the bale who houses the company overnight in a way station. What was initially hospitality the next day becomes imprisonment, when da Gama and his group are denied boats to return to their ships. Da Gama protests that he is not treated as "a Christian just like them." He is then moved to a Moslem merchant's house. Here too, the machinations continue, when it is suggested that da Gama order his ships closer to land in order to unload the samples. Da Gama counters that he would gladly stay with them "as a Christian among other Christians" but the Samorin has instructed him to unload the ships. The Portuguese now are literally imprisoned, kept under guard and requested to turn over their sails and rudders, lest they sail away without paying port duties. After further threats and negotiations, they are finally allowed to unload some samples. When da Gama lodges a complaint with the Samorin, he is told that his mistreatment was the fault of "bad Christians" who would be punished. After this considerable setback in his trading initiative, da Gama moves his wares to Calicut proper where intermittant commerce resumes and the Portuguese are treated well by "resident Christians."

But the Samorin no longer feels the need to feign diplomacy. When da Gama sends him what he feels to be a suitable *servico,* he is given a cold reception and when he requests to purchase some spices for King Manuel, he is refused and ordered to immediately pay his port taxes. The Portuguese response: How could a Christian act in a doglike fashion (*perraria*)? It is only possible because the Moslems have poisoned him against them. At this point, da Gama takes hostages in order to secure the return of his goods and crewmen left on shore. The Samorin now acts aggrieved, claiming he had no part in the hostilities and strikes a bargain with da Gama's emissary, Diogo Dias, to return the hostages for the goods. Rather than keeping to this bargain, the Portuguese abscond. Da Gama leaves Calicut with the intention of returning to take vengeance. On their return trip, the Portuguese continue to encounter Christians on the Kanara coast and on the Angedive Islands. As far as da Gama is concerned, there is a considerable Christian *I* community in the India he has "discovered."

III) A Christian Imaginaire

The debacle of da Gama's first voyage cannot solely be attributed to confusion over etiquette or suspicions regarding the Indian court. Nor can we blame his difficulties on the Portuguese inability to distinguish between Hindus and Moslems, or foreign trading Moslems and indiginous Moslems.[10] The issue depends in large part on how the Portuguese perceived their mission. We have seen how the *Roteiro* attributes the expedition to a desire to find Christian and spices. Damiao de Gois says that the expedition sailed simply to discover India (1.2). Joao de Barros alludes to the complexity of the endeavor. He contextualizes the voyage by recounting the background of Spain's conquest by the Moslems, their expulsion from the peninsula by the Portuguese kings, the conquests made in Africa by those same kings, the enterprises of Henry the Navigator, and the efforts of Afonso V and John II (1.1-3) . Barros thus frames da Gama's expedition as a natural continuation of the previous exploits of the Portuguese. Barros records a public declaration of Manuel in which the king appears inspired by three motives: the desire to continue the efforts of his illustrious predecessors, his hope to propagate the faith and a desire to amass riches and extend territory.

The search for allies for the coming war against Islamic powers (Disney 1994:26) and the ideological need to forge unity between Eastern and Western Christendom (Silva Rego *Historia* 1.379) were the important motivating forces for the expedition. If we ignore that this initial contact was hostile and that the ' Christians discovered were actually Hindus, the first voyage was a success. At its conclusion, da Gama fully believed that the kings and people of India were Christian, albeit heretical ones. The logic here is that the caste Hindus that da Gama encountered in Calicut were Christian because they were cultured and possessed an organized religion as opposed to the African pagans.

Manuel also believed that da Gama had discovered Indian Christians. In a letter to the sovereigns of Castile, he announced that the Portuguese had found the Christians for whom they had been searching. These Christians did not possess the holy faith in its entirety, but Manuel hoped to convert them to complete acceptance.

> And your Highnesses may believe, in accordance with what we have learnt concerning the Christian people whom these explorers reached, that it will be possible, notwithstanding that they are not as yet strong in the faith or possessed of a thorough knowledge of it, to do much in the service of God and the exhaltation of the Holy Faith, once they shall have been converted and fully fortified (confirmed) in it. And when they shall have thus been fortified in the faith there will be an opporunity for destroying the Moors of those parts (Ravenstein 1898: 114).

In a letter to the Cardinal Protector, Manuel also noted that the King of Calicut and the majority of his subjects were Christian, although heretical (Ravenstein 1898: 115) . In subsequent instructions to Cabral, Manuel presumed that a sufficient relationship with the Samorin of Calicut has been formed that he can be reminded of the duty of all Christian kings to fight Moslems as enemies of the faith and refuse them trade relations (Silva Rego, *Documentacao* 1.13ff) . It was not until Cabral met real Christians in Malabar that da Gama's error of encountering Christians in Malindi, Mombasa and Calicut was corrected. It was not until da Gama's second voyage that the fantasy of collaboration perished (Disney 1994: 26).

The question then remains. Did da Gama find Christians in Calicut because he wanted to find them or were the Portuguese truly deceived? A close reading of the *Roteiro* suggests if not a solution then a possible reformulation of the question. Christianity appeared in the narrative as a package of practices, objects and beliefs that amplify reality and add ritual security to the encounter. It provided a code or cultural grammar that organized the Portuguese relation to the Indian Other. It allowed adequate expression of the emotional states involved in the encounter. Thus, Christianity functioned as a trope that combines representations of the real with the manipulation of reality conceived as such. The author of the *Roteiro*, brought into play interpretation, decipherment and wishful thinking. Understanding became a truly subjective experience, based on individual interiorization. Our anonymous author created a body of knowledge that served to conceive the Hindu as Christian. This packaging of Christianity stands in contrast to the irruption of reality that the narrative reveals and the significant cleavage between representation and power. At the same time that Manuel wrote to his Spanish in-laws, Isabella and Ferdinand, a Florentine merchant named Girolamo Sernigi wrote to a friend in his home city an account of da Gama's voyage. He remarked that Calicut was Christian but noted that its churches had no priests and the divine offices were not performed nor were masses said. In a second letter written after Sernigi had spoken to the native informant, Caspar da Gama, who had returned with the fleet, the Florentine writes that the Indians were idolaters. There were few Christians and the churches were temples and the pictures represented idols and not saints.

> To me this seems more probable than saying that there are any Christians there to be taken into account, excepting those of Prester John, whose country is far from Calichut on this side of the Gulf of Arabia, and borders on that country of the King of Melinde, and, far in the interior, upon the Ethiopians, that is the black people of Guinea, as also upon Egypt, that is the country of the Sultan of Babylon. This Prester John has priests, who offer ā sacrifices, respect the Gospels and the laws of the Church, much as is done by other Christians (Ravensfcein 1898: 138).

Clearly, the native informants adapted their information to their interlocutors (Subrahmanyam 1997: 161).

However, misunderstanding was on the level of belief. The Portuguese believed that they discovered Indian Christians and sought to impose their misprision, even though the Indians were obviously Hindus. The Indians, given the Portuguese strategy of games and dissimulation, mistrusted their motives and agenda. The narrative mediated these misunderstandings. The Portuguese projected their own identity onto the Indians. Neither population assigned the same boundaries to the real and everything led to misunderstanding and misrepresentation. The Portuguese structured the Hindu reality, introduced images and patterns of conduct into a Christian *imaginaire.* They created Christian scenarios to be used to illustrate and resolve Portuguese conflicts of mission. Indian Christians constituted a favored site for the projection of Portuguese fears. Christianity was, indeed, threatened, especially since, despite the imaginary Indian Christians, the Portuguese discovered (or rather) rediscovered on Indian soil their traditional adversaries - the heretic Moslem.

NOTES

1. The primary source for documentation is the *Roteiro*. Additional information is provided by Manuel's correspondence, published by Antonio a Silva Rego, *Documentacao para a Historia das Missoes do Padroado Portucrues do Oriente, India* 12 vols. London: 1947-58.
2. The Sao Gabriel was captained by Vasco da Gama, the Sao Rafael by Paolo da Gama, the third ship, the Berrio was captained by Nicolau Coelho, and the fourth ship, a supply ship led by Goncalo Nunes.
3. Neither he nor any of his captains went ashore. This strategy of the captains staying on board would become, in later years, offical policy.
4. For an analysis of Portuguese and Moslem antagonism in Kerala, see Bouchon 1972: 3-59.
5. Da Gama paid the two pilots that he got from the Sultan of Mozambique well (thirty misqals of gold and cloaks), with the proviso that at all times one of the pilots stay on board, to vouchsafe for the behavior of the other.
6. The Indian women do not fare as well in this description. The text describes them in the following manner: "The women of this land are in general ugly, and have small bodies, and they wear much gold jewelry around their necks, and many chains on their arms, and on their toes they have rings with precious jewels."
7. He noted that he subsequently saw similar representations in other "churches" he visited.
8. I borrow this term from Carmen Bernand and Serge Gruzinski, *De l'idolatrie: une archaeologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Seuil, 1988): 11-12.
9. The origin of this term is unknown. It has been speculated to be a deformation of samudri raja, "king of the sea" in Sanskrit'or Hindi. The case also can be made that it derives from the Malayalam term tamaturi or tamuri, also meaning "sea king."
10. Part of the problem may stem from the terminology used by the Moslem interpreters. In Arabic, they called the Hindus infidels (cafres, caffers), a negative epithet that was also used in reference to Christians (Hobson-Jobson 140-42). The Portuguese did not realize that Moslems recognized several types of unbelievers.

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A Changing World: Women and National Identities Emerging through Shifting Geographic Spaces

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Both India and Nigeria, third world nations have a history of struggle in their national movements against oppressions and inhibitions imposed by the British imperialist rulers. In this paper I intend to focus on the emerging national identities through the eyes of women characters and their participation in the struggles in the novels *Pratham Pratishruti* and *Subarnalata* by Ashapurna Devi and *The Joys of Motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta. In all these novels there are geographic shifts in the lives of the women protagonists which lead them to a perception of a change immediately before or during the process of nation building. And these geographic shifts merge to become ideological shifts as well, where these women always move a step ahead of their confining familiar surroundings.

In the pre-colonial era, Nigeria had about a hundred, different tribes living along the banks of the river Niger. For the necessity of the British colonial powers, which aimed to form an urbanised society out of an agrarian one, there was a need for cultural homogeneity and its convergence with a political unit. Thus, the present Nigeria was formed where men of diverse cultures were juxtaposed to achieve a nation state for the benefit of the colonisers. Likewise, diverse cultures were coaleased in the nineteenth century Bengal, under the hegemony of a new middle class, itself a product of English education, to build a new nation based on reason and enlightenment.

'If we women do not realise the ignominy in remaining under constant watchful eyes, who else will? Why, we are no better than maidservants to the servants (of the colonial rulers).'[1] Says Subarnalata, a protagonist in Ashapurna Devi's text. In spite of this, the women from lower or middle class families were expected to be nothing but exemplary wives and mothers. The revolutionary acts of nation-building occurred beyond their limited private sphere and they were exposed to the struggles, achievements and failures only when circumstances compelled them to face the outer world.

In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Nnu Ego leaves her village to marry Naaife, who works as a washerman for a white official, Dr. Meers in Lagos. The lorry in which Nnu Ego travels from Ibuza, the town near her village to Lagos seems to symbolize the state of the evolving Nigerian nation, where different tribes work cramped together, oblivious of their glorious past cultures, only surviving for a decent meal.

'In Lagos there was no time for petting or talking to each other about love. That type of family awareness which the illiterate farmer was able to show his wives, his household, his compound had been lost in Lagos, for the job of the white man, for the joy of buying expensive lappas, and for the feel of shiny trinklets'.[2] Nnu Ego never gets accustomed to the changes she sees around her in Lagos, where the trends of the modern western culture slowly encroaches over the traditional tribal customs still prevalent in villages and finds her husband effeminate, because, as she scornfully explains, 'he washes women's underwear' instead of tilling the land.[2] She does not comprehend why her husband is herded off to war while she is plunged into dire poverty, without food or shelter. The urban civilization gave birth to nucleus families, where, unlike in the villages, the husband brought home the bread, while the wife remained at home and looked after the children. In the rural society along the Niger during the pre-colonial period, men and women used to share the responsibility of earning the necessities of the family. Although the men received the benefits of the major crops, the women had a fair share and used to have stalls in weekly markets, where they sold their products. They had a prominent voice in society and participated in several matters relating to the public sphere. However, the new western socio-economic structure became so absorbed within the Nigerian community in Lagos that Nnaife feels uneasy when he loses his job, Nnu Ego sets up stalls in the market, and he has to stay at home and look after their child. When Nnu Ego is evicted from their quarters during the second world war, she finds tenancy in the house of a person of the Yoruba tribe. Other neighbours like lyawo of the Urhobo tribe and Mamà Abby of a different social class extend their hands to help Nnu Ego look after her children. From a world in Ibuza, sketched in the initial chapters, where the whole tribe lives like an extended family, Nnu Ego is thrust into a world, separated from her kith and kin and alienated from their familiar gods and beliefs. Now we find that she shares her joys and sorrows with people who were treated as enemies back in her village.

Similarly, Satyabati in *Pratham Pratishruti* extends kinship towards women from different castes, classes and even religious faiths when she comes to Kolkata from her in-laws' in the village. She extends a helping hand to 'Katwar bou', a young widow and later a social outcast back in the village, when she eloped with another man. Satyabati even encourages this widow's daughter to take up formal education and gains satisfaction when the young girl embraces the Brahmo religion and begins teaching in Bethune school. She herself teaches girls in the primary level during the afternoons initially without her husband's knowledge. Nnu Ego belongs to the generation when Nigeria goes through extreme destabilization due to colonialism and the world war. As a consequence, although she begins her married life in Lagos as a protected wife in a lower-middle class family, the war drives her to earn a living outside the home. Unlike her, Satyabati remains a homemaker even after her shift to Kolkata as her husband Nabakumar, a clerk in a British firm, earns enough for their family. However, she steps out of her home in her own volition and enthusiastically gets indoctrinated with the changing scenario of nineteenth century Bengal. Causing ire and anxiety to Nabakumar, she goes to attend lectures delivered by Keshab Chandra Sen in the Brahma Samaj, visits Ramakrishna Paramhamsa in Dakkhineshwar and even participates in social services for the benefit of young women while pretending to visit temples.

Satyabati goes through four major geographic shifts all through her life. When she goes to her in-laws, village from her own after her marriage, she feels like a caged bird. Ever protesting, ever vivacious, she convinces her husband to look for work in Kolkata. And at last, against several obstacles and ill-wishes from her in-laws and neighbours (the Indian village is again an extended family) Satyabati accomplishes in establishing the modern western nucleus family in the metropolis. However, her struggles do not end there. Keeping pace with the awakening nationalism, Satyabati does her best to convert herself into the emerging concept of the "new woman" The new imagery of the woman was a perfect balance between tradition and modernity, an educated and refined wife blended with a home-loving and caring mother. However, Satyabati does not fall into the trap of the emerging ideology. Through education, she simply escapes the physical and psychological confinement of the home and struggles to find an identity for herself at home and in the outside world. When she gives birth to her daughter Subarnalata, she dreams of giving her all the education and exposure , so that she can identify herself as an individual, not as someone's wife or mother. When Subarnalata is married off by Nabakumar and Elokeshi, his mother, without Satyabati's knowledge she feels a resigned disgust towards a society where a woman's opinions regarding her children's lives are not given serious thought, and she goes away to Varanasi where she dedicates her life educating young widows. In a letter to Subarnalata, Satyabati advises her to educate herself and her children, as she feels that unless the women are emancipated, the nation cannot attain political independence. She writes,–

> Not only in literary works or in folk-songs, in the future men will have to admit that women also have individual entity ..... women are imprisoned by passion and emotion ...... there is no one as helpless as a mother, – these inhibiting facts give opportunity to this male-centred society to take the advantage of us ! But I'm sure, someday there will be an end to all this. With the independence of women will come the independence of the nation.[3]

Subarnalata, unfortunately, is just once able to escape the confinement of her joint family after marriage, when she visits her sister-in-law, Subala, in the village for a short while. Here she meets Ambika, Subala's brother-in-law, who is an active freedom fighter. When he reads out patriotic poems to her, Subarnalata is deeply moved as she associates the nation's shackled state to that of the women of the nation.

Other than this very short episode, Subarnalata remains in Kolkata all her life. She shifts three houses after her marriage and in the final house lives away from her in-laws. However, by that time she had lost heart in having a home of her own. Her conservative, narrow-minded family by marriage denies her even a balcony facing the south as even her husband Probodh fears that she might find distractions outside her family by looking out in the streets, into another geographic space.

In spite of the absence of the balcony, Subarnalata often brings in gusts of fresh air into her claustrophobic world. When newly married, she collects poems and articles from one of her distant sister-in-law Jaya and later, ignoring the social codes of the family, from a nationalist leader in the neighbourhood. She encourages all the children of her family to sing patriotic songs everyday and urges them to reject their clothes and toys of foreign make during the Non-Cooperation Movement. She is accused by the other adult members of her family for encouraging the children to be indisciplined and they order her to desist from such 'seditious' acts. Much later in her life when Ambika comes to meet her, her husband and son drives him out of their house with insults. However, Subarnalata steps out and speaks to him. This shows that Subarnalata denies the geographic domain of her house representing her family and society and steps out to an outside world where she can ideologically participate with the surging waves of the freedom movement of the nation.

Subarnalata's family after marriage is so orthodox that they allow their women to travel around the city only in carriages with windows tightly shut. In this section of the society even the men constantly interacting with the outside world are impervious to the ever-progressing nationalist movement. They deny education to their women, term the freedom fighters as infuriating terrorists, and find no reason why the British government should quit India.

The women are contented with their lives and their greatest ambition is to be considered a dutiful wife and mother of healthy sons.

Subarnalata's lone voice passionately cries out 'Vandemataram', evoking the freedom of the nation, shattering their complacency and the walls they had built around them. However, she is sensible enough, to see beyond the whims and fantasies generated during the movement and talks of doing something constructive. When the 'charka' or spinning wheel is pioneered by Mahatma Gandhi, her son Kanu insists that she and her daughters weave at home. He says:

> "You know, even ninety year old men and women are spinning. People keep spinning while on the streets." His mother replies, "Well, let them. It is the fashion of the times.""Fashion! You call this fashion! Swaraj will not just he handed over to you. You have to strive for it, sacrifice for it." Subarna laughs and says, "So where is the toil in spinning threads? And what's the sacrifice committed? And where's the time for all this for the women of middle-class families?"[4]

Just like her mother Subarnalata instructs her younger daughters to pursue their studies seriously. She insists that with education women will gain respect and identity in society. Her husband is irritated and amused at her ambitions for her daughters. When his wife sets examples of Kadambini Ganguli, Sarojini Naidu or Kamini Roy, he insists that they do not belong to ordinary households like theirs.

Thus Subarnalata finds very little breathing space at home and feels liberated like a bird out of a cage on her short visit to the village and infrequent visits for a few hours in the liberal atmosphere at Probodh's aunt's place in Kolkata itself. Once, for a short while, Probodh's cousin Jagu publishes journals which encourage the people to come out and fight the colonisers. In his temporary printing press, Jagu agrees to publish Subarnalata's autobiography, 'Smritikatha', through which she tries to escape to another geographic plane. However this ambition of hers, like most others, remains thwarted and she burns up all the printed copies of her work.

Escape to another world by creating connections with people of other spheres remains a theme in all these texts and also the ones to come. Kehinde, Nnu Ego's daughter marries a man from the Yoruba tribe, thus inciting her father Nnaife to a murderous rage, Bakul, Subarnalata's youngest, vows to reveal the agonies of her mother and becomes a famous author who reaches out to several people all over Bengal. Bakul's niece Shampa, elopes with a young man from the working class.[5] Thus with the beginning of shifts in geographic and ideological spaces during these times of social upheaval, a craving for more familiarity with other regions and communities seems to build up.

I feel that these women protagonists have perceived 'nationalism' in the simplest and direct manner – where different sets of people with different cultures and approaches forge a well-orchestrated, integrated society for the betterment of their nation as a whole and where all women and men are placed on equal footings as free individuals and where there is no incident of constant hegemony for supremacy of half the nation over the other half. Crossing their geographic and ideological barriers they reach out to others with hopes for better familial bondage, social well-being and a national integrity as well.

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2. Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood* (London, New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1979), 38.
3. *Subarnalata*, (see references no. (1)), 364-65.
4. *Subarnalata*, 429-30.
5. Ashapurna Devi, *Bakul Katha* (Calcutta: Mitra & Ghosh Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1974).

"In Tears Amid The Alien Corn" : The White Woman and The Colonial Landscape as Depicted in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Grass is Singing*

HEMA NAIR R.

The title of the paper, that is a quotation from John Keats' *Ode to the Nightingale,* represents the tears of Ruth as she stood sorrowfully in the wheat and barley fields of Boaz. The alien landscape that Ruth finds herself in is as much the reason for her tears as her bitter experiences. As an exile longing to go home - the ideal topos, as one who find herself on the margins and longs to proceed to the centre, as one whose voice of suffering is slowly making itself heard, the metaphor of the homesick Ruth in tears amid the alien corn, is perhaps the most suitable for the female protagonists in the novels under discussion. The experience of the female protagonists of the two novels, Jean Rhys' The *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing,* which spans an upbringing in the colonial/racial atmosphere, the feeling of being exiled, the slow alienation from people and environment, the graduation to madness and the premonition of death, have many elements in common. The attitudes of the patriarchal society that force women into a powerless, victim position are also explored.

Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, written in response to Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Evre* tells the tale of the silenced, archetypal "mad woman in the attic". She is called Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* but Jean Rhys endows her with a different identity. She is Antoinette Cosway, who, because of her mother's marriage to Mr. Mason and his subsequent adoption of her acquires the name of Mason. When the unnamed male protagonist who marries Antoinette (whom the reader identifies as Mr. Rochester) begins to call her by another name, Antoinette is as confused as her pet parrot Coco with his eternal question of "who's there?" She is already confused over her identity for the black people call her

> "...A white cockroach. That's me. That's what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you I often wondered who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all..." *(Wide Sargasso Sea* 64).

Antoinette realizes that

> "names matter, like when he wouldn't call me Antoinette and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents her pretty clothes and her looking glass... " (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 117).

This realization came to her late for when Rochester first calls her Bertha she makes only a token protest and is inclined to think that it does not matter. (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 86-87). Yet the more astute Christophine is able to see that as part of "breaking her up" Rochester had begun to call her other names. By the end of the second part of the novel, Antoinette, who after Marionette acquires the name Bertha, which she hates, is finally the doll that Rochester meant to make of her. "... I scarcely recognized her voice. No warmth, no sweetness. The doll had a doll's voice, a breathless but curiously indifferent voice...." (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 110). Economically and emotionally dependant on Rochester, Antoinette discovers, to her dismay that Aunt Cora's perception of Rochester as "... stiff. Hard as a board and as stupid as a foot... except when his own interests are concerned... " (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 72) is nothing but the bitter truth. Bereft of security, plagued by questions of identity and denied warmth and love, Antoinette is helpless within the patriarchal society that strips her identity and her wealth. The tradition of the mad Creole wife is established – a wife with "long sad, dark, alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either... "(*Wide Sargasso Sea* 40). Rochester's hatred of his wife spills over to hatred of the people and the place.

> I was tired of these people. I disliked their laughter and their tears, their flattery and envy, conceit and deceit. And I hated the place.
>
> I hated the mountains and the hills, the rivers and the rain. I hated the sunsets of whatever color. I hated its beauty and the secret I would never know. I hated its indifference and the cruelty that was part of its loveliness. Above all I hated her. For she belonged to the magic and the loveliness... (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 111).

Antoinette on the other hand encounters England first in terms of her geographic lessons:

"England, rosy pink, in the geography book map" (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 70). The newly weds experience their respective lands as a dream. The coldness, the darkness and the nightmarish quality Antoinette associates with the England that she creates in her mind is applicable only to one particular enclosure- that of Thornfield. Antoinette dissociates the cold dark place from her dreams of swans and the snow. She is so disoriented and confused that she has lost all sense of where she's placed geographically. In part three of the novel, as the mad woman under the charge of Grace Poole, Antoinette is allowed a brief excursion outside the cold enclosure of Thornfield.

> That afternoon we went to England. There was grass and olive green water and tall trees looking into the water. This, I thought, is England. If I could be here, I could be well again... (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 119).

Antoinette uses the time that she spends outside Thornfield to barter her locket for a knife that she later uses against her stepbrother Richard Mason. The grayness and the drabness of the windowless enclosure that was her habitat are entirely different from the vibrant colors of her home in Windward Islands.

Entombed in the attic of the stately mansion, manacled by her own inadequacies that manifest itself in Thornfield, Antoinette is like a fly caught in an ointment, doomed to spend her life in the toils of her dreams of reconciliation with Rochester- miasmas of her own making. The escape route that Christophine had suggested to her of tactful withdrawal into Martinique and staying there until her husband came to her is not accepted by Antoinette. Nor is she ready to follow Christophine's instructions to keep her emotions-both love and anger-under control. Her favorite pose that she adopts even in the last part of the novel - " I held my right wrist with my left hand and waited..." (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 112) is a self-detaining passive gesture that is broken only at the very end. When she is able to break the attitude enforced on her, Antoinette yearned to wake to freedom and peace. Her final journey along the dark passage is full of the promise of a drought of air and the light of a candle. The heaven that Antoinette yearned for is death that brings safety and freedom from fear. She dives into the pool of Coulibri that flows over the hard pavement stones of Thornfield-a pool that mirrored Tia, her lost other.

Like *Wide Sargasso Sea, The Grass is Singing* is a novel of enclosures and how they affect the human spirit. The hard, arid, sun drenched country, the formal pattern of convention, the strongly organized society and the social irregularities in the white/ black relationship of servant and mistress contribute to the sense of claustrophobic atmosphere of restraint. The self defeating personality of Mary Turner for whom white colonial standards does not count is thus opposed to the colonial hierarchy. The novel begins with a newspaper clipping of the death of Mary Turner and in an extended flashback. Mary's childhood, youth, courtship and marriage is revealed. Her alienation from her peers in the face of her disinclination to marry is something that Mary fails to understand until she hears a friend's unkind remark that "she isn't like that all" (*The Grass is Singing* 48). The denial of her sexual nature puzzles and upsets Mary so badly that in order to restore her self-esteem, she rushes into the ill considered marriage with Dick Turner. The marriage is a failure since Mary is sexually cold and socially reserved. Her encounter with Moses the black servant and her realization of his dark attraction leads to the moment of self realization. "They said that I was not like that, not like that. It was like a gramaphone record that had got stuck at one point..." (*The Grass is Singing* 232). The shy and furtive phrase that Mary repeats like a parrot has yet an element of triumph for Mary rejoices at the emergence of her sexuality. Yet the moment of self-realization brings with it the inevitable recognition of her transgression. The border she had crossed and the taboo she had broken in her irrepressible need of Moses would never be pardoned in the racist colonial society. The slow decline to madness and to death becomes inevitable with Mary Turner's inability to cope with reality.

Lessing's deterministic philosophy emphasizing the influence of geographical, cultural and societal environment upon the individual controls her tendency to shape her novels according to architectural principles. Landscape, to Lessing, is an implicit determinant of plot and character indicating that geography not only dictates behaviour but is also its symbol. In her autobiographical collection of conversations and experiences published as *Going Home*, Lessing states that realities tend to be "rooted in geography". (*Going Home*, 306) This is as true in *The Grass is Singing* as in her *Canopus in Argos* (*Going Home* 39) novel sequence in which action and perception are governed by place. The Canopean geometric cities provide many suggestive metaphors for control that mirrors some responsive order in the stars. If in *Going Home*, Lessing portrays the home where she lived as "...an immense bird cage set in the middle of the bush..." (*Going Home* 39), the house of the Turners appear to Mary as frail as an eggshell. Even if in Mary's case the house failed to fulfill the promise of life and stressed the inevitable need for the struggle for existence, the house is yet a retreat from the harsher veld.

> She had never become used to the bush, never felt a strong sense of alarm when she realized the strangeness of the encircling veld where little animals and unfamiliar birds talked. Often in the night she woke and thought of the small brick house like a frail shell that may crush inwards under the pressure of the hostile bush... (*The Grass is Singing* 198).

If to Dick Turner, the veld is a symbol of security and newly found freedom, to Mary Turner, the heat and the dryness of the land, together with poverty causes feelings of extreme claustrophobia. Mary Turner endows the bush with an almost human malevolence.

Dick's home is not accepted by Mary as the ideal habitat, not only because of its location in the veld but also because of the materials that had gone into its making. The cumulative description of Dick's house achieves greater significance in the light of Lessing's distinction between "processed" brick habitations and homes put together with stuff of soil and grass and tree. This is also in keeping with Lessing's memory of her own childhood home in the kopje that she always felt comfortable in- the only place she could call home.

> Soon there was my father in a cigar shaped house of thatch and mud on the top of a kopje that overlooked in all directions a great system of mountains, rivers, valleys while overhead the sky arched from horizon to empty horizon. (Vogue 132)

By implication, Lessing sympathizes with Mary's dissatisfaction with Dick's house that is an assortment of bricks and corrugated iron- an intrusion upon the land, a harbinger of death.

Mary finds her ideal space in the town.

> Even the sky looked different, seen from between the well-known buildings that had seemed so fresh and clean with their white walls and red roofs. It was not the implacable blue dome that arched over the farm enclosing it in the cycle of unalterable seasons; it was a soft powder blue... It was a different world. It was her world (*The Grass is Singing* 122).

The blossoms of the bauhinia trees that lined the streets of the town appear like butterflies to Mary while the trees around the farm in the veld were "vague, dark presences" (*The Grass is Singing* 62) which were "hostile" (*The Grass is Singing* 63). Her retreat to the trees that hated her is triggered by her uneasiness within the house.

> ...And the little house was bending over like a candle melting in the heat. She heard the crack, crack, the restless moving of the iron above and it seemed to her that a black body like a human spider was crawling on the roof trying to get inside. She was alone. She was defenceless. She was shut in a small box, the walls closing in on her, the roof pressing down.... But she would have to go out to meet him... (*The Grass is Singing* 255).

The image of the waiting trees that pressed closer to the house and Mary's dread of their creeping up to her unawares in the shape of Moses, "the black spider on the roof" (255) makes Mary realize that the house.

> ...Would be killed by the bush which had always hated it, had always stood around it silently, watching for the moment when it could advance and cover it, for ever, so that nothing remained... At last the bush would cover the subsidizing mass and there would be nothing left... (*The Grass is Singing* 242)

Interestingly the reflection on and the description of the house are preceded by her clearsighted view of herself.

> That was how they would see her, when it was all over as she saw herself now: an angular, ugly, pitiful woman with nothing left of the life she had been given to use but one thought: that between her and the angry sun was a thin strip of blistering iron, that between her and the fated darkness was a short strip of daylight... (*The Grass is Singing* 241)

She experiences death itself as the bush avenging itself.

Apart from the veld, the sun is an image of tension echoing its symbolic meaning in *The Wasteland* to which the work owes its title. The corrugated iron roof that sang and cackled and the lack of ceilings become as much a symbol of Mary's preoccupation with the "destroying heat" (189) that slowly became an "obsession" (189). The heat inside is as unbearable as that without.

> Hatless under the blazing sun, with the thick cruel rays pouring on to her back and shoulders, numbing and dulling her she sometimes felt as if she were bruised all over, as if the sun had bruised her flesh to a tender swollen covering for aching bones (*The Grass is Singing* 182).

The long tension of the dry season is finally resolved by Mary's death and significantly it begins to rain. In *The City and The Veld*, Mary Ann Singleton observes that the tension between drought and water symbolizes the marriage between Dick and Mary Turner and "the easing of psychic tension in death" (Singleton 328). The hated veld itself is not so hateful to Mary in the absence of the intense heat. Sunrise in the farm is forever a time of enjoyment for Mary and a feeling of wonderful joy swamp her. However the beauty lessens when the sun rises with its "harsh brazen light" (238). Mary Turner hated the sound of cicadas for she equated it to "the sound of the sun itself" (*The Grass is Singing* 238).

The image of England - of "home" is as important as the image of the alien veld and the cruel sun. Initially, England or home is something Mary encounters in the African store that doubled up as a post office. People with letters from "home" are represented as those who are

> momentarily transported back into the country for which they are bitterly homesick, but where they could not chose to live again. "South Africa gets into you", these self exiled people would say ruefully. For Mary the word "Home" spoken nostalgically, meant England, although both her parents were South African and had never been to England... (*The Grass is Singing* 37).

During her mental breakdown, Mary encounters the word England once more in a book she discovers in the hut allotted to Tony Marston. Mary examined the titles and in one of the books entitled *Rhodes and the Spirit of Africa*, it was stated that he conquered a continent. The inordinately funnysentence "Rhodes sat on an inverted bucket... dreaming of his home in England..." made Mary laugh (*The Grass is Singing*). Unlike Antoinette Cosway who needed to assure herself that England was not just a dream or a pink coloured patch on the map, Mary is convinced of its reality. She recognizes that England would be "alien" to her. Like Martha Quest of *The Children of Violence* novel sequence and Anna Wulf of *The Golden Notebook*, Mary Turner is struck by the "terrible lying nostalgia" that is implicit in the longing for home/England. (*The Golden Note Book* 328)

However the dis- ease Mary Turner feels in the farmhouse in the veld, like the disease that Antoinette Cosway feels in England is part of the deeper psychological displacement she suffers. It is symptomatic also of the fact that desire and discontent must be unfocussed in existing discourse and that they can be contained only through categorization as madness-a pathological condition. The shifting meaning of the word madness and its role within the power structure of society is explored in the depiction of the madness of Antoinette and Mary. Both Mary and Antoinette are categorized as a mad when their actions are unacceptable.

Antoinette is "broken up" by Rochester and being in a victim position is unable to help herself. Mary undergoes a nervous breakdown that does not lead to the "breakthrough" of material enclosures that in other Lessing novels achieve a synthesis of mind, body and spirit. Both Antoinette and Mary are emotional figures who define themselves by relationships with men. Mary is as insecure as Antoinette and both need to feel protected. Quest for safety lead both to marriage. Both feel safe in female dominated environments. Antoinette feels safe in the Mount Calvary Convent in Spanish Town, Jamaica and is frightened by the outside world- a world that contained the bullying quadroon children who had laughed and tortured her. The outside world also harbored the dark stranger other dreams who took her through a forest to " an enclosed garden surrounded by stone walls... the trees are different trees". (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 34) Mary Turner feels safe in the girl's club where she lived in an all-women environment. As a workingwoman she had a lot to do with men, but she never "cared" for them. If Antoinette is victimized by the patriarchal society that denied her the right of ownership and by her half-brother, Richard Mason, who made no attempt to protect Antoinette legally by arranging a settlement, Mary is the exponent of the prejudices of the white Settler society governed by apartheid. She is also the victim of colonial/patriarchal society. She cannot understand any white person feeling anything personal about a native and hence the development of an individual relationship with Moses is schismatic undermining thereby her indoctrination by the white civilization that denies the possibility of human contact between a black man and a white woman. Mary's liaison is offensive both for its sexual connotations and for the shift in power which vests dominance in Moses. The contemptuous disdain Mr. Slatter shows Mary by staring at her is partly echoed by Rochester in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

> "Why do you hug and kiss Christophine", I'd say.
> "Why not?"
> "I wouldn't hug and kiss them", I'd say. "I couldn't"
> (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 57)

Even Tony Marston of *The Grass is Singing*, a newcomer to the colonies is not free from prejudices though he claims to have an open mind. When a fellow traveler tells Tony that a number of white woman had relationships with black men. Tony believes that it would be like having relationship with an animal in spite of his "progressiveness". Marston is shocked when he sees Moses helping Mary to dress. The same aversion that Rochester shows surfaces in Marston. Lessing's depiction of Moses, unlike Rhy's depiction of Christophine, is vague. He is a "reflector of white responses".(Thorpe 13) It's only with the publication ofThe Golden Notebook that Lessing lost her inhibition in presenting a specific black mentality. Just as the black identity, overtly suppressed, emerges as the dark threat of the veld in *The Grass is Singing*, the Creole identity in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is defined by negatives. Antoinette who sees her mother adopting the English way of life and the English perspective observes that she is "...without doubt, not English but no white nigger either. Not my mother. Never had been. Never could be... "(*Wide Sargasso Sea* 18). Uprootedness as well as entrapments makes both novels of alienation. If Antoinette appears to be a zombie- "... a dead person who seems to be alive or a living person who is dead..." (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 67), Mary is no different. She appears to have "forgotten how to speak..." and sits as if she "wasn't quite all there..." (*The Grass is Singing* 223). In their attitude towards time, as well as space and state, both Antoinette and Mary show total indifference and apathy. Mary Turner is represented as having "lost all sense of time" (*The Grass is Singing* 195). Time is "unendurable" to Mary (*The Grass is Singing* 181) and "has no meaning" for Antoinette (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 120). She is the lunatic who "always knows the time. But never does" (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 107)

Antoinette and Mary are however not mirrors of each other. The sun, which to Mary is the symbol of tension and destruction, is something that Antoinette longs for. Rochester promises himself that Antoinette would not laugh in the sun any longer and would see no one. "My lunatic. My mad girl. Here's a cloudy day to help you. No brazen sun... No sun... No sun. The weather's changed..." (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 107). Antoinette however longs for the sun and feels the coldness of the sea. The sight of the old red dress she owned is attractive to her solely on account of its color that reminded her of fire and sunset. The scent that came from the dress- that of vetivert and frangipani, of cinnamon and dust and lime trees was subsumed by "the smell of the sun and the smell of rain..." (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 120).

Ironically, it is Rochester who shares Mary's feelings for the bush and for the forest as a green menace where even the light is different. "... A green light. I had reached the forest and you cannot mistake the forest. It is hostile..." (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 65). Rochester's vision of the house calling for help

> More than ever before it strained away from the forest like a black snake. Louder and more desperately it called" Save me from destruction, ruin and desolation. Save me from the long, slow death by ants. But what are you doing here, you folly? So near the forest. Don't you know that this is a dangerous place? And the dark forest always wins... (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 108)

is very like Mary's vision of the bush swamping the Turner's corrugated house.

Dick Turner, poor, defeated by guilt at having married at all, is far kinder to Mary than Rochester is to Antoinette. He watches helplessly while Mary slides into a breakdown unaware that before marriage Mary had been advised by the doctor to have a holiday. Rochester, on the other hand, is accused by Christophine of breaking Antoinette up.

Though Dick Turner does not seek to make Mary a doll or a parrot or keep her entrapped as Rochester tries to do with Antoinette, he does not want her to assume charge in farm matters. Mary is a more efficient farm manager than Dick for she has a far keener eye for the best ways of maximizing profit. However she is not allowed to assume the role of the white boss for she, as a woman, "exists on the margins of black/white power structure" (King 9) and her efficiency threatens Dick's position in the rigid structure of power. Patriarchal attitude however colors this requirement and is evident in Dick's need for "male conversation" with Slatter while Mary is free to indulge in "woman's talk" (*The Grass is Singing* 93). Dick Turner unconsciously notices the different jargons of the gender. However this is quite unlike Mary Turner's encounter with "kitchen kaffir" or Rochester's encounter with "Creole patois" that is spoken by Christophine and other black servants of the Windward Isle. It is problematized by questions of race. While the whites complained of the stupidity of the native, they expected them to stick to their milieu. Speaking English was considered cheek and Mary uses the horsewhip on Moses for daring to speak English instead of kitchen kaffir (*The Grass is Singing* 146). Rochester is as disgusted with Christophine's English, which he calls "horrible", as he is with the "debased" French patois spoken in the island (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 52,40). The oppression of the colonial society in the Windward Island of the 1830s and the Africa of the 1940s is a tangible force. Emancipation may have given the coloreds their freedom but they were still regarded as invisible and as little different from animals. *Wide Sargasso Sea* exposes the imperialistic bias of *Jane Eyre* and attempts to counter inequality and domination by making use of a counter discourse to rework the ideological, formal and linguistic patterns of the master narrative. *The Grass is Singing* is an ironic yet compassionate exposure of the fragility and the futility of the myths upon which white settler society has sustained itself.

In narrative structure too, the novels are similar. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is divided into three distinctive parts. The first part is a first person account of Antoinette and traces her childhood at Coulibri and her experiences as Miss Antoinette Cosway Mason. The implicit promise Mr. Mason makes in Part I of a friend from England who is likely to stay with them becomes a fact for Part II begins with the honeymooner's journey to Granbois. Part II is largely the first person narrative of Rochester except for Antoinette's interruption of the narrative because of her growing confusion and her uncertainty about Rochester's love for her. Part III is connected to Part II by the image of the enclosure that Rochester draws in Part II of a house with an attic in which a woman is entrapped. Part III falls into two narrative patterns and begins with Grace Poole's monologue addressed to Leah. The narration taken up by Antoinette, is the alternative discourse that voices the silenced presence of the mad woman who groans and grunts but does not speak in *Jane Eyre*. *The Grass is Singing* is a novel in eleven chapters but it is clearly in three parts. The first narrative movement begins with a newspaper report of Mary's murder and the events immediately after that. It includes Tony Marston's realization that what was important was the pattern of the Turner's life. The next narrative movement traces Mary's successful life as a single woman and culminates in her marriage to Dick Turner. The third narrative movement falls into two clear sections. The first part of the third section is to do with Mary's straggle in the veld to make a success of her marriage and ends with Mary's unsuccessful attempt to return to the city. The next section traces Mary's patient waiting for death. Unlike *Wide Sargasso Sea,* the novel is written from the perspective of the sympathetic outsider and stresses the marginal, the exiled and alienated point of view.

Like the image and theme of enclosure and like the concentric and overlapping enclosures of the overall didactic intelligence that frames the tales, the writers make use of the strategy of doubling and repetition in the novels. The images and the techniques of doubling are reinforced by the portrayal of the mother. Lessing's penchant for duplicating and merging figures is "a lifelong fictional strategy". (Sprague 24) Marriage returns Mary to the poverty and the rage of her childhood, and to the cage of repetition- the unhappy life full of economic pressures that her mother had faced- and which she had hoped to escape. She feels that she is "back with her mother, watching her endlessly contrive and patch and mend" (*The Grass is Singing* 65). The language of doubling suits Mary's duplication of her mother's life and recognizes her mother as an older, "sardonic double of her herself" (*The Grass is Singing* 110). She is not just the image but also the echo of her mother for she speaks in a new voice- the voice of her mother- the voice of the suffering female. The need of the woman to name her mother and the ban on the daughter not to talk about her mother is the schism at the heart of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In *The Reproduction of Mothering,* Nancy Chodrow argues that women's identities develop in identification with their mothers and continue in an interdependent empathic relationship with them that is real or imagined. In an uncanny doubling of her mother's story, which had been constantly prophesied by malicious neighbours, Antoinette reenacts her mother's experience. She marries an English man and is driven mad by the tension between his assumptions of her as well as his demands on her and her own feelings of displacement and alienation. Locked away in the tomb like attic of Thornfield, Antoinette, like her mother is a ghost in her own lifetime. Antoinette loses her way to England, just as Annette lost herself when she lost her son. Antoinette is categorized by

Rochester as "the infamous daughter of an infamous mother" (*Wide Sargasso Sea* 121). Apart from the mother/daughter doubles, the novel abounds in other dual images /repetitions that emerge as a narrative strategy. Antoinette's fate is enacted by Coco, the parrot who perishes in the Coulibri fire-Tia, her childhood tormentor in Coulibri who steals her dress is the double of Amelie, who is Granbois, steals the favor of Rochester. In *The Grass is Singing*. Mary and Moses is a "dialectical pair expressing antithetical issues in both political and psychological contexts... ". (Rubenstein 50) However dialectic, in Lessing cannon, refers not only to the conflict between opposites but also to "unity of the opposite". (Sprague 2) Mary and Moses are linked by their fates as victims. Neither has a surname. Mary acquires one when she marries Dick Turner but Moses does not have one at all. Both Mary and Moses are socially powerless, Mary by her gender, Moses by color.

The dichotomy between the centre and the margins is evident in both the novels. The novelists are both from the colonies and they write from the margins of the centre and its workings. The colonial experience itself is contradictory. The colonist is by origin, an outsider imposing his will on what he sees as an undeveloped people and country. He is assertive while defending this position that only insiders like him can see enough to judge. While remaining an outsider in his adopted country, he also exists on the margins of his "home" (i.e. England). Unwilling to comprehend the experience of the colonized land, he is equally unable to accept the attitude of the British who observe from the privileged position of the center of the Empire. For a woman, the position is even more complex since she also exists on the margins of her own society. The ideological processes that determine the center and the margin is observed and questioned by the counter discourse, which resist both closed reading and imposition of a single authoritative meaning.

Women write from the position of a sub culture upon which have been imposed the values and structures of the dominant patriarchal culture. The works of the women novelists- one brought up in the Windward Islands and the other in Southern Rhodesia may be said to be doubly colonized. They write from the point qfview of someone who is part of the tradition ofWestern European literature but is yet distanced from it for they write from the margins. As far as Lessing and Rhys are concerned, the marginal perspective is also their greatest strength as writers, giving them a freedom to explore and analyze the centers of western culture. The ambivalence of the marginal position like that of the expatriate/exile, unhappy in the alien landscape, associating not with its people but with others like herself, yet sensing uncomfortably that she can't go home again is the plight of the writers, their female protagonists and also the biblical Ruth of the title.

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Reading Contradictions: The Refugee and the Patriot

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The 'post-colonial', is in the first instance, contingent upon territory or space. Political independence is, from one point of view, an exercise in territorialisation of national claims. It is often marked by an obsession with a bounding of territory and a (re)drawing of borders. Vindication of a nation's claim to territory implies an element of the sacred being attributed to territory as well as to the borders that bound this territory. Thus, with the territorialisation of national claims enjoying a temporal congruency with the (re)birth of the nation as state, it should come as no surprise that borders, boundaries, the politics of space and of mapping space constitute important preoccupations of postcolonial writers.[1]

The notion of space immediately invokes the corresponding notion of the transgression of space – thus the travel or journey motif assumes operative importance in post-colonial literature. The travel motif implies the potential of a transgression of boundaries as defined by discourses of nationhood and nationalism. This is so because travel not only transgresses borderlines as they are demarcated on the map and actualized on the ground, thereby questioning the sacredness of territory and the naturalness of national divisions, but because it also provides one direct exposure to cultural practices other than one's own – and such an exposure can help understand better one's own cultural identity. After all, one can best understand the self through an understanding of the other – a person is a person because of other people, a culture is a culture because of other cultures. In this context, one remembers Cassius' words spoken to Brutus: "And since you know you cannot see yourself so well as by reflection, I, your glass, will modestly discover to yourself that of yourself which you yet know not of".[2] Yet, in spite of its transgressive charge, travel also threatens to usher in, along with physical displacement, a sense of dislocation and rootlessness.

All these concepts – space, territory, travel and exile – are of significance for this eassy. This paper focuses on *Refugee*, a contemporary popular Bollywood film, and investigates the relationship between geographic location and national identity. It tries to understand this relationship by reading *Refugee* in comparison with two other works, Ruskin Bond's *The Room on the Roof* and MG Vassanji's *Amriika*.

I would like to posit *Refugee* as a 'relevant' text as far as the scripting of nationalism and contemporary history in Indian popular culture is concerned. In this film, where the notion of space is of operative importance and the bleak desert landscape of Rajasthan, mostly free of any major landmarks signposting it, is a constant visual presence, Abhishek Bachchan plays Refugee, a character whose name defines his identity. He is a character who plays the role of the refugee in the film. He is, first of all, an orphan. Though he seems to have been brought up lovingly by Jan Mohammad, he does suffer from rootlessness – this is evident from his words: *"Mere to aaj kuchh nahin hai, Baba. Na ma, na baap, na bhai, na bandhu, na koi bhakt.*

His job is to smuggle refugees and other goods across the border. He knows the desert well, and, with the help of his foster father and family, is able to evade the BSF and carry on with his activities. He falls in love with Nazneen, a Bihari Muslim girl whom he had once helped smuggle to Pakistan, and who has, since, settled down in a village on that side of the border. Refugee and Nazneen are caught while trying to escape to India, where they have decided to settle, even if it means living as refugees. Nazneen is returned to her parents by Ashraf, the 'decent' Pakistani officer, who, incidentally, is also one of her admirers.

Unknown to Ashraf, the 'good' Pakistani, Refugee is beaten unconscious, put on a camel which knows the route to India and sent off with a load of RDX. The camel is intercepted near the border by the BSF's Raghuvir Singh (Jackie Shroff) and his men. Singh succeeds in talking 'sense' into Refugee. He makes him understand that by smuggling men across the border, he has been helping terrorists who have been wreaking havoc in India. He converts him to his cause. Soon, Refugee turns into a fighting machine, thanks to Singh's training and is ready to fight against terrorism.

It may seem, at first glance, that *Refugee* is a run-of-the-mill film–one that employs a populist brand of nationalism and uses the well-worn cliché of the rebel/aberration transforming into a patriot. What makes this film relevant, though, as far as I am concerned, is the fact that this transition is not a smooth one; it is not without its disjunctions. It is more than a reiteration of the sanctity of national borders; it does its bit to interrogate these shadow lines as well.

Refugee attempts to reconcile the tensions between internationalism[1] and the traditional avatar of nationalism that we are used to encountering in mainstream Hindi cinema. And, that is precisely why it lends itself to such contradictory readings. On one hand, it embodies the 'popular' voice, which, particularly in recent times in South Asia, has been interrogating the overt breast-beating brand of nationalism, and has thereby been challenging the construct of the nation-state (this is evident from media outpourings of the essential cultural oneness of Indians and Pakistanis and from the way Track-2 diplomacy has become part of everyman's vocabulary and from burgeoning people-to-people contact; one also notes the coming to light every now and then of tales of men and women falling in love with each other across the border, through the internet or otherwise, and wishing to transform the nascent relationship into a marital one – several such cases have grabbed media attention in recent years and have problematised the sanctity of borderlines). On the other, it appears to succumb to this very brand of uncritical nationalism which, too, perhaps paradoxically, is so very contemporary and relevant to our post-Kargil, post-N-test and post-"nationalist-party-in-power, reality–the transformation of Refugee seems to vindicate this. But, can this transformation be read as a rejection of the former, and thereby, of its necessary corollary, that of internationalism? Not so, I think.

What is important in *Refugee* is not the outcome, but the dialogue between these two contradictory ideologies. This contradiction, to me, is a non-antagonistic contradiction. The refugee *can* be a patriot. It is possible to read *Refugee* as a patriotic film, even, perhaps, as a nationalistic film, without having to reject the claims of internationalism. In fact, in engaging in a dialogue with these two, the film seems to highlight the inadequacy and incompleteness of each of them.

It is true that towards the beginning, Refugee lacks commitment to any sense of nationhood. For him, his job is to show the lost the way *("bhatke huey ko rasta dikhana")*; "*aap mere liye mehas saaman hai*", he says. It is not his job to judge, to find out what kind of people they are. It is also true, that during the course of the film, he seems to be appropriated by the Indian nation-state and its machinery – he earns a uniform and fights to keep India united.

However, what is to be noted is that Refugee responds to the label 'Indian' only since the point where he is taunted by the Pakistani soldiers who beat him up. Till then, he shows no commitment at all to the claims of nationhood; in fact, if anything, his actions are those which defy such claims (this does not mean, though, that he is one of the rootless brigade, for his geographic location shapes and gives him his identity–he belongs to this land, but not to this nation). In other words, he is interpellated, much against his wishes, into taking on the mantle of a national identity. It is of course tempting to read this transformation as a reiteration of the claims of nationalist discourse and as a reiteration (perhaps an uncritical one at that) of the impossibility of remaining immune to the appeals of nationalist discourse even in a post-colonial world fast becoming 'global'.

My argument is that there is no transformation at all, at least in the sense that we have been talking about. What shapes Refugee's initial lack of commitment is a larger sense of belonging, a belief in the notion that human beings are essentially one, and it is human beings who have created differences, borders and boundaries. It is again, this larger sense of belonging, this 'humanism', for want of a better word, that shapes his actions later (The following conversation between Refugee and Ashraf should corroborate this) :

A: *Tum jante ho tum jis jagah par tum khare ho, waha tumhe khara hone ka koi haq bhi nahin hai.*

R: *Kyon nahin? Kya yeh Allah ke banayae huey dharti ke hisse nahin hai?*

A: *To tum yeh samajhkar mohajiron ko uspar se ispar aur ispar se uspar le jaate rahe ho?*

R: *Bhatakte huey musafiron ko manzil tak pahuchana guna hai kya?*

A: *Matlab bara neq kaam kar rahe ho. To tum ne hatiyaron ko bhi... manzil tak pahuchaya hoga...*

R: *Maine kabhi kisi ka andar jhaak kar to nahin dekha insaan acchha hai ya bura. Sirf itna janta hoon ki khairepaani mein bana hua yeh rasta Allah mian ne banaya hai to aane jaane ke liye.*

A: *Matlab tum kisi kanoon ko nahin pehchante, haan? Kisi sarhad ko nahin pehchante? Hindustan aur Pakistan ko bhi nahin pehchante?*

R: *Hindustan Pakistan honge, saahab, mujhe koi farq nahin dikhai deta.*

A: *Matlab tum samajhte ho ki Hindustan mein aur Pakistan mein koi farq nahin.*

R: *Hoga, sahaab, par main usse samajh nahin paata. Ab aap hi bataiye–mere Abbu aur Chacha sath sath rehte the, bhai the. Chacha is taraf aa gaye rehne ke liye to bhai se padosi ban gaye. Rehne ke jagah badal jane se bhai bhai nahin reh jaate, kya?*

(A: You know, you have no right even to stand on that strip of land where you are now standing.

R: Why not? Is this not also part of the same land that was created by Allah?

A: So, that is why you ferry refugees from this side to that, and from that side to this?

R: Is it a crime to reach lost travelers to their destination?

A: So, you're doing a good deed, eh? Well, you must have...also reached arms and weapons to their destination, then?

R: I've never peeped inside a person's heart to see if the person is good or evil. All I know is that if Allah has made this road in this desert, it is for traveling over it.
A: Meaning you don't recognize any laws, eh? Don't acknowledge any borders? Don't even acknowledge the existence of India and Pakistan?
R: There must be an India and a Pakistan, but I don't see any difference.
A: So you think there is no difference between India and Pakistan?
R: May be there is, sahaab, but I cannot understand it. You tell me – my Abbu and my Chacha used to stay together; they were brothers. Chacha came over a live on this side and from brother he turned into neighbour. Does a brother become any less of a brother if one moves to another place?)

If he reforms, it is not, I feel, because he has suddenly discovered commitment to the nation, but because he sees that his actions have resulted in the death of hundreds of innocent people. It would thus probably be too superficial a reading to see Refugee's apparently mushy, overdone appeal to the villagers and his fight against the terrorists as a surrender to nationalism; rather it highlights the conflict between the temptation of the makers of contemporary popular cinema to highlight the absurdity of Partition and of artificial cartographic borders on one hand and the temptation to reiterate accepted tropes of nationalist discourse on the other.

The question that arises now, as a result of this reading of *Refugee*, is whether it is possible to have a situation where one side will not have to cast the other as the Other, when one will not interpellate the other into existence as a nation/nationalist, whether the internationalism Refugee seems to represent is feasible. The film itself appears to give a 'yes' answer, if we go by the end, where everything turns out happily, and Raghuvir Singh and Ashraf Mian talk amiably as old friends. But the espousal of internationalism in these last few minutes is terribly wishy-washy. Naaz gives birth in no-man's land and we are asked to reflect on what the child's citizenship would be. We are encouraged to imagine (I use the word deliberately) a land where there would be "no passport, no visa". "*Saari duniya ka shahari hogayeh bachcha*", "*...kisi ka bhi nahin, aur sab ka bhi*". He would belong to a land "*jiski* *sarhad ya seema kuchh nahin hoga, aanajaane par koi rok-tok nahin hoga, aur us watan ka naam hoga Insaniyatsthan*". This is one of the greatest failings of the film, as far as I am concerned. It ends up wallowing in a cheap and populist brand of internationalism, choosing, as it does, to sign off on a feel-good cathartic note, without really examining the mechanisms of internationalism, without even differentiating clearly between internationalism and its alter ego, globalism, the cousin which waits in the wings, looking for a chance to masquerade in the attire of internationalism.

We shall return later to globalism, the rootlessness it gives rise to, and the complicated identity pulls it creates, all, issues relevant to the relationship between geographic location and identity. This will be our point of entry, as far as MG Vassanji's *Amriika* is concerned. Before that, though, let us take a look at another work that deals, in its own way, with the notion of space--Ruskin Bond's *The Room on the Roof*.

Sixteen-year-old Rusty is a refugee in his own way; he does not quite belong either in the physical space he inhabits or even in the discursive space that is implied by his physical location within this space. He is a refugee from civilisation as he knows it. Rusty is an Anglo-Indian orphan; Mr Harrison is his guardian. He is the only young person in a settlement of old Europeans who have opted to stay on in India after Independence. The European settlement on the outskirts of Dehra is isolated from the town, the bazaar, from India itself.

This closed world delineates Rusty's geographic location; and it problematises his identity. This is a self-contained world; and as long as its inhabitants are here, they blind themselves to the outside:

> "The surroundings on the whole were so English that the people often found it difficult to believe that they did live at the foot of the Himalayas, surrounded by India's thickest jungles. India started a mile away, where the bazaar began". Unlike the others who inhabit this world. Rusty doesn't have a past to hold on to. His guardian thinks (and has taught him) that playing with the sweeper boy is unhygienic and that the bazaar is full of thieves and germs. Bond writes: "On the other side of the Clock Tower lay the bazaar, and in the bazaar lay India. On the other side of the Clock Tower began

> life itself. And all three–the bazaar and India and life itself–were forbidden."

At this point, Rusty suffers from an incomplete national identity. He doesn't even know at this point that he is not *pucca* (pure) English. *The Room on the Roof* is about how Rusty breaks out of this closed world with all its prohibitions, discovers friends, India and himself. It is about how the Anglo-Indian (Mr Harrison blurts this out in anger one day) boy reconciles his double inheritance, about his fear that he belongs nowhere, and his confidence that he belongs everywhere, as I have pointed out in 'India through Anglo Eyes', *The New Indian Express*, Bangalore, issue dated 15 October, 1999. This is a confidence that only a more authentic geographic location can give him; and it is a location he has always been searching for–hence, his intense desire to explore, even, to "get lost". And this is a location he discovers himself, a space where he rehabilitates himself. His discovery of his mixed parentage only facilitates the rejection of the false space his guardian had created for him and the relocation that follows.

At first, Rusty discovers the bazaar secretly, on his forays into the India he has always seen at a distance. Rusty discovers the taste of *tikees, chaat* and *gol-guppa*. He discovers the colours of Holi. Most importantly, he discovers that the people here are all just like him. It is these experiences that give him a sense of belonging, that make him both the refugee in a picaro sort of way, and the patriot. His patriotism, of course is very different from the one that we associate with nationalism of the kind we seem to encounter in *Refugee*[2] His patriotism means the ability to respond to his guardian, "(Yes,) I'm no better than the sweeper boy, but I'm as good as him. I'm as good as you!"

His taste of the outer world gives him the courage to leave his insensitive guardian and strike out. He spends a night in the open, learns to bathe in cold water at a public tap. And, through such actions, he earns for himself a new location and a more complete identity. It is this breaking out of the physical space thus far assigned to him and this direct experience of the outside world that helps Rusty discover himself and to reclaim his own identity in the context of his lived Indian realities.

It is significant that Bond mentions that Rusty feels nothing for the people on the streets, the naked, emaciated, dying human beings, on his first visit to the bazaar "because he could not see himself in the same circumstances". The contrast is evident; later, he becomes one of them and earns himself a space in their midst. And this is a space he has been craving for, and one without which his identity would have remained incomplete.

Vassanji's novel is a different ball game altogether. *Amriika* is Ramji's tale–the tale of an exile. It is about his student days in the USA, his attempt to understand America, his temptation to assimilate, his doubts, his problematic identity and the guilt he feels about forsaking his country and settling in the USA.

Ramji, in fact, is the archetypal displaced. Born to 'Indian' parents, brought up in Dar, he studies and, later, settles in the USA. "In America, Ramji is a victim of displacement; and it is not just the physical displacement that affects him. There is a disjunction between the idea of America he and his Dar classmate, Sona, have grown up with and the America they encounter. Kennedy, Elvis, the Empire State Building. That was what the USA had meant to them. In the USA, though, they find themselves in the midst of a revolutionary subculture. They encounter the radicalism of the 1960s; the university is a hotbed of political activism, 'Bring the war home from Vietnam' and the Third World are causes to die for, and the "military-industrial complex" is enemy number one. There is protest, dissatisfaction and rebellion–a far cry from the America they had expected" (from 'Discovering America', my review *of Amriika,* published in *The Statesman,* Impressions, issue dated October 8, 2000).

Geographic dislocation, in its transnational incarnation, always plays havoc with identity and one's sense of allegiance. The fact that Ramji has, for his roommate, Shawn, an out-and-out radical, complicates things further. Shawn introduces him to this subculture of dissent and tries to convert him.

Refugee defines a refugee thus: "*Refugee use kehte hai jo ashray mangne aata hai*". Ramji's new country has been good to him so far; it has given him *ashray* and more. He understands the dissent; his identity as someone who had been, till recently, located in the Third World and who had, therefore, a more legitimate claim to the issues being debated in the university, make it impossible for him not to. But he feels it would be ungrateful of him to join in the protest (he voices these doubts to Ginnie, his host in the USA) and tells Shawn he supports the Americans in Vietnam.

Still, Ramji clearly admires the spirit of dissent he encounters in the USA–it makes him conscious that he now belongs to a larger world: "Back in Dar, we thought only of our small community...We could not think of all of humanity as these Americans do, with such immediacy, such urgent concern... how liberating, how exhilarating, to think that one belonged to a larger world, cared about it, could make a difference to it!" And, one day, this admiration takes over; and he joins the picketing protesters.

Still, Ramji nurtures a doubt somewhere inside: "This concern for humanity and peace, Ramji thought as he stood at the back of the crowd... can it be real, is it sincere?" This is natural, for, as Vassanji himself said (my interview with MG Vassanji, 'Coming Home' in *The Statesman*, issue dated 29 May, 2000), *Amriika* is a "quest novel". "*It's about a quest for a moral position on the part of an immigrant who has gone to a new country*".

Towards the end of the novel, Ramji discovers he was justified in entertaining such doubts. He comes across a book written by Shawn. The book, *Dissent to Nowhere*, repudiates the 60's students movement as "the excesses of crazed, misguided, and spoilt middle-class youth". Again, this is precisely the point in the narrative where *Amriika* seems to fail to live up to its promises. By showing that Ramji's doubts were indeed justified, the novel seems to be compensating for his lack of direct involvement in the protest movements and the detachedness with which he had participated in them – a detachedness that can also be read perhaps as having arisen out of the fear of being labeled an 'ungrateful outsider' in a foreign land. What is particularly disturbing is the fact that there is no clear indication that while Shawn may have betrayed the ideologies he once represented and fought for, the ideologies themselves may have been worthwhile, justified and worthy of great risks and great sacrifice.

Ramji's discoveries are extremely painful for him–he now finds that the people who had helped convert him to their perspective and awaken him politically, have forsaken that perspective. "How easy for these rich American kids to renege and say it was all misguided, a mistake. We're home, repentant, and all's forgiven. He had come to view the sixties as a period of rebirth, from ignorance and narrow-mindedness into enlightenment and an awareness of the world; what a bitter pill to see it repudiated thus. It was as if the priests themselves, who had been the most fanatical, had turned against the faith – giving it a bad name, so you couldn't talk of Third World exploitation or the growing difference between rich and poor without looking utterly ridiculous."

A problem similar to the one Ramji faced when he came face to face with the culture of dissent in the 1960s confronts him when he comes across Michel (previously Mehboob). The Michel episode highlights the complex claims of identity on the exile. Michel is from Dar, the place that used to be 'home'. He is a suspect in a recent bombing. He approaches *Inqalab*, the newspaper for which Ramji works, protesting his innocence. Ramji is torn between the desire to hang on to the security that years of assimilation have given him and the urge to help one of 'his' people. It is a conflict between the national identity his present geographic location has given him, and the identity that was once his, in an age when his past location was not too far in the past.

Thus, what ties the three texts together is the preoccupation with space, physical in the first instance, and metaphorical or discursive in the later. Yet, the three texts use 'space' in different ways to highlight and problematise notions of identity, belonging, commitment and nationhood, and in the process, as our reading shows, they end up on occasions coming dangerously close to contradicting the very theses they apparently try to posit vis-a-vis displacement and national identity, *The Room on the Roof* perhaps a little less so than the other two texts.

NOTES

1. "A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement." Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 8.
2. William Shakespeare, "Julius Caesar" (Act I Scene 2, lines 67-70) in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Peter Alexander (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1979), p. 971.
3. For details, see 'India through Anglo Eyes', my eassy published in *The New Indian Express*, Bangalore (5 October, 1999).
4. A very relevant reading of 'patriotism' and 'nationalism' in the contemporary Indian context is made by Badri Raina in 'Patriots and nationalists' in *The Hindustan Times* (28 November, 1999), p.13 :

"...My 'patriotism' does not lead me to the rather uncritical conclusion that my culture is, arguably or not, the 'best' or the most 'superior' worldwide, or that everything about 'India' is, as they say, hunky-dory. I know that other countries have facilities I wish we had; that other countries have developed and nurtured institutional practices that seem constantly thwarted in 'India' by habits of personal and collective abuse. I am aware, for example, that public and political morality in many other countries is far more evolved than in India. I allow myself to think that India has some very crucial things to learn from other lands and other peoples, even as I also know that those other countries and people I speak of could use many of our accreted perceptions and practics with great profit.

"The 'nationalist' is, however, a different kettle of fish. 'Nationalists' may best be defined perhaps as uncritical, myth-making patriots. The 'nationalist' is invariably convinced, that his or her 'nation' is superior to all others in all matters – from the 'divine' organisation of its soil all the way up to the specially endowed quality of its dominant law-givers. ...the 'nationalist' distorts, rearranges and misrepresents the past and the present."

5. See 'Discovering America', my review of MG Vassanji's *Amriika*, in *The Statesman: Impressions*, October 8, 2000.

"A Tear Frozen in Marble" – The Taj : A Comparative Perspective

D. K. PABBY

The underlying concept in most works of art is often linked with the deeper emotions. When we consider them in their natural and humanistic context, the artistic space reveals unique experiences expressed through different forms of human endeavour. In this paper I will take up the Taj Mahal as architectural expression and present, in a comparative framework, a study of the creative writers' response in four Indian languages to this object of beauty called the Taj Mahal. The title of the paper has emerged from the metaphorical expression given to the Taj Mahal by Rabindranath Tagore. As is well known, the Taj was built by the Moghul Emperor Shah Jahan in the form of a 'poem in marble' on the banks of the Yamuna river in Agra as a tribute to his beloved queen Mumtaz Mahal; and its construction which spanned over a period of 22 years was completed in 1654 A.D. This exquisite specimen of artistic and architectural celebration of the finer human emotions of love and beauty is indeed a unique work of art which has been hailed as one of the 'Seven Wonders of the World'. Quite naturally, it has been the source of inspiration and object of comment by several creative writers and art commentators.

By and large, the aesthetic beauty and architectural grandeur of the Taj has elicited praise and appreciation from the connoisseurs. But to the English novelist and essayist Aldous Huxley, "The Taj was a disappointment". In his famous essay titled Agra (1926), he strikes a very critical note about the elegance of the Taj Mahal mainly because of "the lack of variety in the architectural forms of which it is composed". But hidden behind his critical remarks in romantic and poetic prose, is Huxley's oblique acceptance and commendation of the grandeur of the artistic craftsmanship of this fabulous specimen of architecture, the foundations of which are laid on one of the basic human emotions – the feeling of love and devotion. In many ways, the Taj has remained for several generations and is even today the ideal and complete work of human architecture and cannot but fail to arouse emotion in just anyone, a casual tourist, a creative writer, an intellectual or a love-lorn individual; and a rousing of emotion is perhaps the cornerstone and also a significant function of all forms of art. The Taj has, undoubtedly, invited much attention and variety of comments from people of all walks of life – from the visionaries and poets, down to the commoners. While calling it 'a complete architectural experience', a celebrated Indian architect Satish Grover has written thus about its architectural qualities and the sense of harmony that the pattern evokes: "Every aspect of design – be it spatial architectonic, landscaping, surface decoration or interior design – has been comprehended and meticulously detailed and executed." But Huxley remains unconvinced till the end and closes his essay with an ironical remark: "But it is made of marble. Marble, I perceive, covers a multitude of sins."

It has been pointed out by several appreciators of the marvelous splendour of this white-marble structure, that the Taj does not reveal the treasure of its beauty at one go. Many visits are required to savor the visual delight in its totality. The marble used is of such a nature that there are subtle variations of tint and tone with each passing colour of the moment. Every hour of the day, every change of atmospheric condition, gives the Taj its own colour and hue from the soft dreamlike vision of dawn to the dazzling whiteness at midday or the delicate afterglow of the sunset. But of course, it is on a bright moonlit night that the Taj acquires its almost unearthly magic quality. The hazy glow of marble surface, mirrored in still waters of the Jamuna is a sight almost unparalleled anywhere in architectural beauty shrouded in romantic visions –

a beauty, poets, artists and photographers have tried hard to capture to make this "thing of beauty, a joy forever".

Professor Mohan Singh, an eminent Punjabi poet has attempted to recapitulate the romantic aspect of the beauty of the Taj and the sentiment behind it, in the first ten stanzas of his poem Taj Mahal (1939). He imagines the care-free and trance-like sleep being enjoyed by the delicate rays of the moon intertwining the milk-white dome of the Taj. These stanzas, in fact, acquire a dream-sequence when he talks of the "details of the complex" to put it in the language of architecture, which he finds very well-proportioned – be these the carvings and filigree and patterns with an inlay of precious stones, the arches, the alcoves and the gardens rich with turf, with cypresses, palms and peepul trees, etc. The inverted water-picture in the still water of Jamuna fills the poet's heart with immense delight and he imagines the situation to be "an embrace of the lover and the beloved, both of whom are in a trance'. When the poet is all alone there, drinking deep at the fountain-head of rapturous delight that surrounds him on all sides in its quietude, he feels he may still remain thirsty as with all the strength of his physical and mental sensibility, he may yet not be able to imbibe and assimilate the aesthetic beauty of the Taj in all its totality and grandeur.

With stanza No. 11 of the poem, however, we find an abrupt shift in Mohan Singh's view of the Taj. From this stanza onwards, he talks of the sweat and toil of thousands of the construction workers who had to work day and night on the project. It appears that at this stage the aesthete and the romantic visionary in him are left behind, and the stance of his socialist/progressive ideology takes him over. The romantic and delicate dream gets shattered and the onion-shaped dome falls down crumbling into pieces. It appears as if the poet now hears like William Wordsworth's "still sad music of humanity", the loud shrieks, cries and sighs of the thousands of workmen and women who were, more or less, forced to carry on the construction-activity in spite of the near-famine conditions created by severe drought in the region. The poet now paints a pathetic picture of the swollen feet, weakened-legs, sunken eyes, scratched bodies, rough hands and stiffened muscles of the workers whose appeals for mercy and humane consideration of their sordid working conditions often invited the wrath of the officials in the form of lashes. This 'still sad music of humanity' agonises the poet's heart as well as his soul; and wrenched with pain, in the concluding stanza of the poem, he questions the authenticity of the aesthetic emotion that such a marvelous specimen of art and architecture as the Taj Mahal is supposed to arouse.

Another gifted and talented Urdu-poet Sahir Ludhianvi too has articulated his views on and his response to the Taj Mahal in a lyrical poem with the same title. It is in the form of an address to his beloved who considers the Imperial Mausoleum as a supreme embodiment of human love and devotion; and is overwhelmed like many others, by the visual grandeur of the white marble structure. The lover-protagonist in the poem exhorts his beloved to shift their rendezvous from the Taj to some other place as the emotional grandeur and immensity of the place may make his feelings appear in a reduced stage to the beloved. During the course of this persuasive exhortation, the poet underscores several important aspects related to 'love' that he feels cannot perhaps be actualized and sustained by building grand, expensive and ostentatious monuments alone.

A close reading of the poem, however, brings the romantic poet in Sahir to the fore. He is all praise for the craftsmanship of the building and its surrounding patterns and details. He also pays rich tribute to the aesthetic taste, the delicate care and attention and the meticulous effort that have contributed to the shaping and emergence of this marvel. But Sahir's manner of mirroring the other side of the picture appears to be more potent. Giving poetic expression to his feelings, he writes that this luxurious method of celebrating his immense love for Mumtaz by Emperor Shah Jahan, strikes a severe blow to the sentiment of love of the commoners, which may be and often is as true and as genuine, if not more, as that of these royal personages. He feels that the very idea of this public proclamation of private and personal love is a sort of indictment of the love of ordinary human beings and therefore a not very pleasant phenomenon. This glamorous exhibition of his love by Shah Jahan, the poet submits, not only belittles the sentiment of love of millions of lovers in the world, but it also puts to ridicule the genuine love of those who are not as privileged in the matter of worldly possessions, as kings and emperors. Thus this otherwise romantic and sensuous poem by Sahir, subsumes a philosophical and somewhat socialistic sentiment throughout.

The third poem to be discussed here is by a celebrated Hindi poet Sumitranandan Pant with the title "Taj". The poem written in 1935 begins with a lamenting note "Alas: this sordid and immortal worship of death?" As if in contrast to the poems of Mohan Singh and Sahir Ludhianvi, Pant does not take much note of the aesthetic beauty and architectural grandeour of the Taj Mahal. He views with disdain the idea of raising memorials for the dead while the living–ones are maltreated and ignored. He feels that the claims of the living are worthy of much more serious attention than the claims of the dead, however dear they may be otherwise. "We have reduced the living to skeletons; and have chosen to decorate richly and ostentatiously the dead", he regrets.

It is quite apparent that Pant has incorporated the basic tenets of Hindu philosophical thought in his poem, in a significant manner, besides investing it with a socialist and progressive stance. The imperishability and invulnerability of the soul is an important element of this philosophy. And the perishing of the physical portion, therefore, need not be viewed with so much concern as to decorate it with all the expensive embellishments. With his faith in the philosophy of the transmigration of the soul, the poet feels distressed at the loving care and attention that are given to the dead. In his scheme of things, the Taj Mahal represents and embodies only dead ideals of love that have gripped the minds of infatuated individuals generation after generation. The intensity of the physical emotions he thinks, renders the individual blind to the claims of the soul, and the spirit against those of physical love. He regrets that thus blinded, most of us have ignored the eternal message of the continuity of life and have enslaved ourselves in the performance of lifeless and meaningless rituals such as the building of Taj Mahal. He eventually hopes for the dawn of a new era in which there will be a better recognition of the needs and aspirations of the living and a better understanding of life as a continuum.

It thus becomes quite clear that the perceptions, responses and comments of creative writers and art critics vary according to their social, cultural, philosophical and ideological contexts. If the response of the Punjabi poet Mohan Singh and the Urdu poet

Sahir Ludhianvi is primarily romantic; that of the Hindi poet Sumitranandan Pant is a sort of philosophical lamentation. Aldous Huxley being the product of occidental culture brings an entirely different critical orientation. However, by way of conclusion, I would like to reproduce here the observation of Novel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore who while paraphrasing a portion of his Bengali poem "Shah Jahan" for one of the English visitors, said; "I say to Shah Jahan – you knew that grief, however poignant, is mortal, so you immortalise a drop of tear on the cheek of eternity". The opening stanza of the poem, proclaims the poet's sentiments even more eloquently and it may not be inappropriate to close the paper with the same:

> You knew, Emperor of India, Shah-Jahan,
> That life, youth, wealth, renown
> All float away down the stream of time.
> Your only dream
> Was to preserve forever your heart's pain.
> The harsh thunder of imperial power
> Would fade into sleep
> Like a sunset's crimson splendour,
> But it was your hope
> That at least a single, eternally-heaved sigh would stay
> To grieve the sky.
> Though emeralds, rubies pearls are all
> But as the glitter of a rainbow tricking out empty air
> And must pass away,
> Yet still one solitary tear
> Would hang on the cheek of time
> In the form
> Of this white and gleaming Taj Mahal.
> *(Tr. William Radice)*

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